THE Hudson REVIEW

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JOHN WAIN
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The Son of Christ—a long poem

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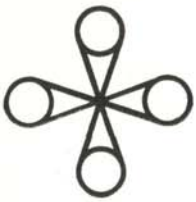

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The Hudson Review

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THE HUDSON REVIEW is published quarterly by The Hudson Review, Inc., 65 East 55th St., New York 22, N. Y. Subscription $4.00 per year in U. S. and Canada; foreign $4.50. Single copy, $1.25; U. S. distributor: B. de Boer, 102 Beverly Rd., Bloomfield, N. J. Business and subscriptions in England: B. H. Blackwell, Ltd., The Broad Street, Oxford. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. Copyright 1960 by The Hudson Review, Inc. Registered U. S. Patent Office. Second Class postage paid at Richmond, Virginia. Indexed in The International Index. Printed by The William Byrd Press, Richmond, Virginia.

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Chicago 37, Illinois
IN CANADA: *The University of Toronto Press, Toronto 5, Ontario*

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JOHN WAIN

Master Richard

ALL CLEAR? ARE MY DEFENCES IN ORDER, is my camouflage skilfully applied? I think so: the Kiddies' Encyclopoedia is my largest book, and if I keep it propped up in front of me I'm fairly secure against anyone coming in through the door, which faces me; and since I've taken care not to sit with my back to the window, there's no danger of any interfering fool looking over my shoulder. I can start writing.

Not that conditions are perfect, of course. It annoys me intensely, for instance, to reflect that there's a perfectly good portable typewriter standing in the corner, which it's out of the question for me to touch; I could get along much faster, once I got the hang of the thing, and in any case the precisian in me would greatly prefer the sight of a neat stack of typewritten sheets to this grubby notebook. But it won't do. The grubby notebook is my only chance of being able to write at all. If I so much as laid a finger on the typewriter, the first person who came in the door would swoop and drag me away from it. Of course there'd be the usual cluckings, and pseudo-reticent boastings, about my precocity. 'Doesn't play with ordinary toys—not he! Why, the other day he made a bee-line for the *typewriter!*' 'Mechanically minded, I suppose,' I can just hear some fool of a visitor saying. 'No, far from it,' they'd answer. 'It's the writing aspect that fascinates him. We just can't keep him away from books and papers. He's going to be a real professor, you wait!'

But what am I thinking of? Use a typewriter—me? To begin with, my arms haven't enough strength to drag the thing up on to the table, and if I did get it up, my fingers are probably too small to work the keys. I watched Him typing a letter on it the other day: he was only using two fingers, and probably slamming the thing much too hard—his great horny digits were coming down like sledgehammers—but even if half the force would have been enough, I could tell I'd never be able to manage it. It's bad enough holding this damned pencil; my hand aches before I've written a page, and in any case the beastly thing loses its point so soon that I have to keep twisting it round to get the lead at a fresh angle. Just

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as I get really started, I expect, it'll give out altogether and I'll have to go and hunt about for a replacement. Because of course I'm not supposed to be able to *sharpen* one. There's no sharpener, anyway, and I can imagine the hullaballoo if I tried to get hold of a knife. I practically have to laugh at the very idea.

No, there's nothing for it but to scrawl away with this thing. Why do I bother? What is it that drives me to try to put my thoughts on paper at all?—But even as I ask that question I can see how obvious is the answer. *Of course* I must write my thoughts down, if only to get the illusion of communicating with someone, somewhere, somehow. It's what all prisoners do—and I, after all, am in a very real sense a prisoner. There's no possible chance of my getting away from these surroundings, from the maddening surveillance of Him, Her, and the rest of them, at any time in the next ten years at least. Ten years!—it fills me with despair to name the term of my sentence. And it's not only the length, but the appalling complication of the circumstances, that numbs me. If all I had to do was to stick it out for ten years, and then be released and free to behave normally, I think I could face it. But it's the problem of how to adapt, the eternal difficulty of gauging how much development I can permit myself each succeeding year, that makes me feel I'll never manage to keep my sanity.

Let me put it quite baldly. At the time of writing I've just had my fifth birthday. That is, the body into which my intelligence has somehow strayed has lived five years since emerging from the womb—Her womb. As far as I can judge, from comparison with the other children I meet, I seem to be a normal enough five-year-old, physically; I can run about quite nimbly, my organs of speech will pronounce a complete vocabulary (I have to keep a watch on myself there, of course, and it's an intolerable strain all the time), I can dress myself (though I make a show of not being able to manage buttons unless they're in front, and not always then), and my voice will sing an octave. But *my mind*—how old is that? At a guess, I should say I had the mind of a man of about thirty-five. It's hard to say, of course, because I've none of the ordinary means of guessing. An ordinary thirty-five-year-old would be able to estimate his own age, should it ever be in dispute, by the things he could remember: his clear memories would go back about thirty years, and in any case he would recall countless events to which a definite date could be attached. What makes my situation so eerie

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is the blankness—rather like amnesia, I suppose. I feel that my interests are those of a man of thirty-five, but I can only feel it in a generalized way. That's about how old He is, I suppose, and I do know that when he has friends in to dinner, and I manage to sneak within hearing range, the things they are saying are usually pretty well on my wave-length. They don't fit in exactly with my interests, but they do sound like a smaller, duller and more repetitive version of the conversations I'd like to be having. Like? I'd give my right arm to be able to talk normally with men of my own age—my mind's own age, that is. I already get plentiful doses of the company of my fellow five-year-olds: little pixies, the apples of their parents' eyes. In other words, a lot of snotty-nosed, egocentric brats, each one the centre of its own stuffy little universe.

Need I dwell on the agonies I go through? She, being a sensible modern mother (that is, just literate enough to spell out the child-welfare articles in the Sunday papers), takes me several afternoons a week to visit other s.m.m.'s—the drill being to put the kids down where they can play together without breaking anything valuable, while the women let their hair down and criticise their husbands. I must say I've had an amusing moment or two, even amid that welter of desperate boredom and loneliness, when I've crawled near enough to hear them go on. The inadequacies they find in the poor devils they're tied to!—it's enough to make me, at the age of five, resolve never to marry. But of course I don't get a chance to sit and hear a whole chapter of marital grievances: there's always the kid—or, as I suppose I should say, the other kid—toddling about, alternately gooing and howling, and I'm expected to pull my weight and join in. It certainly is a peculiar kind of hell. You know the sort of hopeless bewilderment that comes naturally over an adult male when he's left in charge of a young child?—an aching, apprehensive helplessness, arising from the well-founded suspicion that, before many minutes are up, the little cherub will begin to scream uncontrollably, or swallow something and choke, or just go black in the face for no special reason. Well, I feel all that, but it's made a thousand times worse by physical helplessness; being no bigger, heavier, or stronger than the kids I play with, I can't even fall back on the adult's one last defence, his size. And the mental strain! It's unbelievable. I nearly wrote 'it's worse than anything I've ever known,' but I remembered in time that, on the contrary, it's just about the only thing I *have* known. In terms of

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recallable experience, that is. Every conversation I can actually bring to mind has either been with some ga-ga-ing infant or with some fool of an adult who tries to reproduce infantile talk so as to put us on the same footing. And I don't know which is worse.

Of course I must admit that a kindly Providence has spared me the ultimate horror. At least I didn't have an adult intelligence during my years of actual helplessness—or, if I did, I don't remember it. All the time I was having to wear nappies, live on pap, and all the rest of that disgusting business, I knew nothing of the plight I was in. I can't say exactly at what moment I first realized the appalling practical joke that fate had played on me: it was somewhere in the latter part of my fourth year, I think. I was talking by then, and I think language was the key that unlocked the whole wretched situation to me. I simply realized, one day, that the speech of the grown-ups, when I happened to overhear it, fell more naturally on my ear than the kind of babble I was supposed to be capable of. But, even as I realized it, an instinct warned me not to let anyone else into the secret. I don't think I consciously reasoned about it; I just talked as little as possible, and when I had to say something I'd take time to vet it before-hand, to stop myself coming out with anything too precocious.

Because—and this, if anything can, will save some rags of sanity for me—I was, and am, utterly determined not to be a child prodigy, a freak, a side-show attraction. Of course She and He are not the type of people who would actually put me in a side-show; they seem to be good solid *bourgeoisie*—He's in Insurance or something of the kind. It would more probably be a matter of being the wonder of the Medical World. And what's that but a scientific version of the same thing? If I don't want yokels crowding into a tent to gasp at my feats of memory, still less do I want professors and Harley Street types looking at me through their bifocals and making little notes. No, as God is my witness I'm going to grow up a normal boy, a little brighter than most at his school work perhaps, but no freak.

All the same, it's going to be a struggle. Impatience is my big pitfall. For instance, I found it quite intolerable to have to pretend that I couldn't read. There isn't much to read in the house, goodness knows, but I thought that if I could once get over the hump, and make it an officially accepted fact that I could read, I might get access to library books or something. I have such a damned

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hunger for *information*. I swear I could read anything, but anything at all, provided it was (a) in a language intelligible to me and (b) contained some solid facts to sink my teeth in.

Anyway, as soon as I had fairly grasped the nature of my situation, I set about the job of getting it accepted that I could read. The pencil would crumble into acrid dust if I tried to describe the sickening subterfuges I had to resort to. I began, naturally, by pulling books out of the shelves and going through the motions of playing about with them, with signs of both incomprehension and delight. At first, it worked fairly well. 'How fond he is of books!' they squawked. I don't know which of them was the more pleased. Nobody set foot inside the house who wasn't told about my fondness for books, and how I'd make a bee-line for them to the neglect of ordinary toys, and all the rest of it. I began to be afraid of getting known as a Child Genius, but it couldn't be helped. I had to carry on with the scheme. The next step, of course, was to climb up on to the lap of anyone I saw reading anything—like a kitten—and start pestering to be shown what the writing said. 'I want to read!' I lisped, ready to puke at the sound of my own artless prattle. 'I want to read!'

It never worked with Her. She never did sit down to read anything, in any case, when she was alone; sometimes she'd pick up an illustrated paper, but if I clambered up and started the 'I-want-to-read' routine she'd just get hold of me absent-mindedly, keeping her eyes on the page, and dump me on the floor again. It used to make me boil. More than once I've prayed for the strength to brain her. What I found particularly maddening was her way of never giving me more than half her attention. Of course mothers do get like that, with young children, and I suppose the child doesn't notice. But I noticed, by God, and more than once I've gone off to the other end of the kitchen and deliberately smashed a cup. Not just any cup, either, but an expensive bone-china one. It got so that there wasn't an intact set in the house. That shifted her, naturally, and then she'd smack me till I yelled. The funny thing was, I would cry just like a real five-year-old. I mean the thing seemed to be geared physically rather than mentally. In moments of annoyance or fright, I can no more stop myself from wailing and blubbering than an adult can prevent himself from sneezing or coughing. I—the real 'I'—stand apart from it, and listen to myself setting up a racket, but all the same I can't stop it. When She

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leathered me, I'd squall the place down, till the neighbours must have thought she was killing a pig.

After a time, I gave up on Her and concentrated my efforts on Him. He was a push-over. I'd crawl on to his lap, poke my finger at the book (which always seemed to be some shoddy detective-novel), and look up into his face with an appealing 'show me the writing, Daddy! I want to read!' I gave him the full works. Well, of course, he was delighted. 'That's *a,*' he would say, having hunted about and found an *a.* 'It says *aa.* This one's *b:* it says *buh.*' And I would repeat the sounds, and pick out other occurrences of those letters, and we got along fine. After two or three sessions I found it possible to go and sit in a corner with a book; provided I didn't turn the pages too quickly, it passed as a harmless form of play; I was just fascinated by print, and was trying to remember the things He had told me.

I'm leaving out a lot of the details; the act I had to put on was too nauseating. But it was worth it. By the time my fifth birthday came along, I had gained the point; it didn't occasion any surprise if I sat with a book, not just looking at it but demonstrably reading it. Of course that still left the problem of what books I could get access to. My birthday brought me a crop of nauseating children's picture-books. I had to pore over them, naturally, and show every sign of delight in owning some books all to myself. And God, what muck they were! The only way I could reconcile myself to staring at them for the required number of hours was to make up obscene versions of the rhymes under the pictures. But that wasn't much fun, when I thought how I might be spending the time reading something interesting.

My task was a delicate one: to drive into their heads the idea that I liked reading more than playing with bricks and plasticine, but to do it without getting the reputation of a prodigy. It was like the problem of talking. As a matter of fact, I never really mastered the talking business. It's such a strain that I sometimes wonder whether I shan't come out of the whole thing a raving lunatic. I keep my sentences short, and stick to very simple words, but I have to admit that the result doesn't sound much like the unending stream of drivel that pours from the lips of the other five-year-olds I meet.

But one thing is clear—I'm going through with it. There simply is no way out except forward. Sometimes, in the night, I used to

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lie and stare up at the ceiling and think how maddening and monstrous and absurd the whole thing was. Why should I be punished like this? I used to wonder. Is it a practical joke, or a heartless experiment, on the part of some hellish unmerciful God? Or is it simply an accident somewhere among the obscure machinery of the universe: did I wander innocently down a wrong turning in the time-corridor? And in any case, what has become of the body that used to house this mind? The thirty-five-year-old man who used to be me—where is he now? Dead? Or mumbling and playing with his fingers in some institution somewhere, having suddenly switched minds with a child of five? These questions used to hammer through my mind until I'd suddenly decide I couldn't stand it any more, and resolve to get out of bed that minute, put my clothes on, escape from the house and wander about the streets until I saw a doctor's brass plate, then go in and give myself up to his protection. 'I appeal to you in the name of medical science,' I pictured myself saying. 'I don't know the reason, but I'm an adult who finds himself encased in the body of a child. *Do* something, for God's sweet sake!'

But always, at this stage, I would be pulled up by the thought: what *could* he do? What doctor, what specialist, what congress of specialists recruited from every corner of the earth, could possibly help me? And I would sink back, into despair. There was nothing that could help me except time—time and patience.

Here comes somebody I must st

* * *

Well, here I am again. God knows why I go on taking the risk. If these sheets should ever be discovered, I daren't think of the mess I'd be in. Naturally I hide them pretty carefully, among the litter of kiddies' books in my toy-box, but it's a constant worry—my heart thumps whenever I hear Her, or the daily help, chumping about in my room. It's enough to give me ulcers. Yes, perhaps I'll end up as the only five-year-old ever known to have a duodenal ulcer. *That* ought to focus the attention of the medical profession, even if my precocity doesn't.

There isn't much to report, outwardly. I'm going to skip all the tedious little details (e.g. of the God-awful seaside holiday we had last month). Suffice it to say that three months have gone by since

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I last wrote, and only one new thing has emerged: namely, that it can now be taken as absolutely certain that I shall go mad. The strain of this dual perception of life is simply too much. My mind knows too many things that my body doesn't. The other day, for instance, I was horrified to find that I could experience lust. She had a rather good-looking young matron to tea; most of Her friends are dowdy and uninteresting, but this was a girl of about twenty-six, I'd say, who knew how to dress and had kept herself smart. I sat looking at her, while her own two kids squalled together in a corner, and I suddenly found myself imagining her sex-life. She looks as if she got plenty of the right stuff, I thought. And all of a sudden I began leering and drooling over the thought, exactly like a man of eighty. Which is, of course, a fairly exact parallel. And instead of trying to check myself, I went on, letting my thoughts rove, till I started imagining what I'd like to do to her myself. God it was horrible—loathsome. There were no physical manifestations, naturally: no erection or anything like that. It was all so completely *cerebral.*

I went to bed that night in a state of complete despair. My life is ruined in advance, I thought. I calculated the years that must go by before I could have a hope of starting any normal sexual life; thirteen at least. If this were a Latin country, I could cut that down to six or seven; another example of my luck—if I had to be a five-year-old, why couldn't I be a little Sicilian or Argentinian?

So I lay there, facing the prospect. If I could experience physical desire already, what was it going to be like when I got a bit older? Year after year of hell, till finally my mind gives way and I become a sexual maniac. Or a raving homosexual—that's another possibility, especially if they send me to a boarding-school.

Self-pity engulfed me, and I lay and snuffled. The tears brought me some kind of relief, so that I might have drifted off to sleep, but I was just getting drowsy when, suddenly, it came.

Banging down on me like a rafter from the ceiling came a huge, cold, heavy weight of fear. Not just anxiety, but sheer panic, clutching at my heart. I sat up in bed: it was all I could do not to scream.

The reason for my fear? Simply that a thought had occurred to me, a terrible, obsessing thought that had, mercifully, not struck me before. But now that it *had* come, I knew I should never get out from under its chilling shadow. It was just this: how do I know what life-span my mind can expect? If it starts thirty years ahead

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of my body, why shouldn't it end thirty years sooner? When my body is forty, my mind will be seventy; why shouldn't it get tired and die? Think of it as I thought of it—a man of forty, crawling about with a dead mind. No memory, no speech, no *character*. Like someone who's had frontal lobotomy, only a hundred times worse.

Of course it also occurred to me that my body might simply be unable to survive the death of my mind. Without a mind to co-ordinate and direct its impulses, a body can hardly go on functioning. Or should I, perhaps, be left with just enough mental co-ordination to keep me alive as a kind of idiot?

I had to scream, really *needed* to, this time. I put my hand over my mouth, but it was no good. The screams came, as loud and sudden as train whistles in a confined space between walls. Once I had started, I took my hand away and just let rip. Scream upon scream upon scream—it was all I had left, the only relief, the only way I could tell the horrible torturing universe what I thought of it.

And then, of course, we had all the usual commotion; it wasn't very late, and some people who had come to dinner were still there downstairs, and He rushed in, smelling of cigar-smoke, and She followed him up the stairs as fast as she could on her high heels, and it was picking me up and 'There, there!' and 'He's had a nightmare!' and speculation about what I'd had to eat that could have disagreed with me.

I stopped screaming. But that was the first moment I realized that I hated them.

* * *

Well, here we go. She's pregnant. I knew it as soon as they did, but that wasn't difficult; the doctor only confirmed it three days ago, and already the whole town must know. Neither of them can talk of anything else, of course. You'd think He was the first man ever to get results out of a woman, the way he struts about. Bloated ass! Why, in addition to my other sorrows, did I have to get landed with an inane fool for a father? Not to speak of a mindless, blinkered, tiny-souled milch-cow for a mother, who's never had a thought in her life that didn't concern her own physical functions, directly or indirectly. I only have to look at her and I can see her

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whole mental history in that round, inexpressive face with its wide-spaced eyes and narrow forehead. From the age of six months till her wedding-day, how to get a man: from that day onwards, her own role as a viviparous mammal. It's all too brutally squalid. I don't see what either of them is doing wearing clothes or walking upright. And how they misuse the divine gift of speech, real adult speech that I'd give anything to enjoy for ten minutes! As I loll about on the rug, pretending to play with toys, and listen to the grunting and lowing that passes for conversation between them, I feel really mad with anger that these two blockheads should have the use of this precious instrument when I don't.

And now, if you please, they're worried about me. Yes, worried. They've noticed me behaving strangely, as they call it. One or two of the other modern young mothers have said that I don't seem to act like a five-year-old. This, after all my efforts: there's ingratitude for you! If they only knew, the impersonation of a five-year-old that I put on every day, non-stop for hour after hour, is the greatest acting performance they'll ever witness. I've studied the other little horrors very closely (God, what a treatise I could write on infantile psychology!—not that I shall; my one ambition is to be able to forget about the whole subject), and in the interests of a realistic performance I've isolated the two characteristics that essentially indicate the five-year-old *homo sapiens*. The first, of course, is egotism. Morally the little dears I have to play with are at the same stage as a new-born baby. They're aware of needs and instincts, but nothing beyond. They don't understand the concepts of gratitude, loyalty, affection, anything that cuts across the immediate appetite of the moment. The second feature is charm. No, let me give it a capital: Charm, bogus, phony, oozing charm. That's one respect in which the child of five really has moved a long way from the new-born baby. When a baby wants anything, he stretches out his arms and yells. When a boy or girl of five (the sexes are alike in this) wants anything, the Charm comes into play. To see these little matinée-idols look up at their parents and flutter their eyelashes and smile, when they want to twist them round their little fingers! —it's incredible. And I don't blame them; the parents are such a push-over, the idiots. Any detached observer can see that the children are just making fools of them, but they never see it themselves. It's as if they were hypnotised.

The other day, I was 'playing' with a blubber-lipped booby of

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my own age, the son of a woman whose house we were visiting for tea. The weather's good just now, and this kid and I had been pushed outside into the back yard, which the pretentious fool of a woman called 'the patio.' Everything went smoothly for a time—he was absorbed in some fantasy-world or other and I didn't take much notice of him. But presently, his private world built up to a point where, it seemed, he needed some cups and saucers. Don't ask me why; perhaps he was seeing himself as a butler or something. Anyway, he trots into the house, and I can hear the rattling of crockery and an argument going on. His mother, the poor fool, is trying to persuade him not to take cups and saucers outside, or, if he must, not to take the best ones but to wait while she hunts up some old cracked ones. Backwards and forwards they yap about it for a bit, then the woman's voice stops; evidently she's gone off to find some old cups for him. The next thing, of course, is that he appears in the doorway with a pile of cups and saucers balanced unsteadily in his hands. Behind him, clucking a bit but not daring to oppose his wishes, the pie-faced little lord and master, I can see Her, my mum, watching uneasily as he blandly disregards his mother's orders. Coming out into the yard, he puts the cups and saucers down on the bricks and starts filling them with sand or something of that kind. The mother came back, and the two women came out and stared uneasily for a bit, but he just ignored them. They hovered, trying to pluck up courage to grab the cups and saucers and face the bawling that he'd inevitably set up, but finally they cheered each other up by saying that he seemed to be playing quite nicely with them, and didn't seem likely to break them, and decided to leave him to it. I even heard Her say, as they went back into the house, that it would be useful for him to get into the habit of handling thin china. 'Richard's a terror for that,' she said. 'Always breaking my best things. It's the only really naughty thing he does.'

Richard. That's what they call me. Just the sort of good, bourgeois, middle-of-the-road name they'd think suitable.

Well, peace descended. The nipper went on messing about with the crocks and mumbling some rigmarole to himself: he'd won his battle of wills, and he was quite satisfied. And suddenly—I can't quite describe how—a cold rage welled up inside me. Silly, flaccid cows! I thought. Why do they let him get away with it? What they need is a sharp lesson. And I walked straight over to the crocks and

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kicked a couple of them for six. Splinters of china flew everywhere; in fact, the things just disintegrated as my foot hit them. It was one of those rather satisfying sensations, like treading on acorns. The kid set up a yowl, of course, but before the avenging matrons appeared in the doorway I was over on the other side of the yard, playing with a ball. Of course he sobbed out that narsy ole Richard had come and smashed his cups, but children of five aren't supposed to be truthful, and with a bit of wide-eyed innocence I was able to make him look like a bare-faced liar.

I felt better all evening. It made me feel that I'd struck a blow for more disciplined upbringing, and altogether that I wasn't as powerless in the grip of the adult world as I'd thought myself.

* * *

Well, the months have rolled by somehow; I shall soon be six, and at about the same time the population of the household will be increased by one. Arithmetically, that is; if you put it in terms of proportion, you'd have to say that the population was going up by about fifteen hundred per cent. The sheer amount of equipment!—the plastic buckets and the nappies and the Carricot and the pram (a gleaming new job big enough to hold a walrus), and the tiny garments and the tins of powder and the rolls of bandage and mysterious tonics lining the bathroom window-sill! The whole house is in a state of siege.

Meanwhile, I've started school. At any other time I suppose that might have been the occasion of a little mild rejoicing, but as things are it went pretty well unnoticed. The arrangements were duly made, I was taken out shopping and fitted up with clothes and a satchel, and that was that. When the day came, I was taken along by Him on his way to the office, dumped inside the school building, and left to sink or swim. At least, to be strictly accurate, He did come inside for a few minutes and make the teacher a little speech, all about what a genius I was. 'You'll find he can read already, Miss Briggs,' he said, cooing bashfully and trying not to look too much like a man who'd grown a prize-winning marrow. 'Taught himself, with a little help from me now and again!' 'Yes,' says Miss Briggs (prolonging the conversation, I suppose, because she doesn't often get a chance to be within six feet of a man), 'the headmistress was telling me about Richard. It's *very* rare for a

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child to be able to read before having any schooling at all! We're all very excited to have charge of such a prodigy!'

That's torn it, I thought. I nearly kicked her on the ankle to make her shut up. The word 'prodigy' was exactly what I'd been trying to avoid. Being a word of more than one syllable neither He nor She would dredge it up of their own accord; but once they had it put into their mouths by someone else they'd be using it all day long. 'Our elder child,' they'd be saying airily to everyone they met, 'is a Prodigy.' And before long, I'd be irretrievably consigned to the glass case as a freak.

As it turned out, I needn't have worried. I went into school with my heart in my boots, but when I went home for lunch I could see at once that the whole subject had been well and truly buried. He didn't even remember talking to the woman, as far as I could see; the conversation was just baby, baby, baby, as usual. They did ask me, perfunctorily, how I'd got on at school, and I said all right, and they went straight away to baby, baby, baby again.

I was glad, of course, though naturally there's always a certain let-down when you've steeled yourself to fight something and then the fight is called off. I'd made up my mind, during the morning, that if there was any danger of this prodigy business I was going to redouble my efforts to look like a normal child of my age, including a good slab of downright bad behaviour, even if it meant a smack or two. I was five years old, by their calendar, and I wasn't going to let them forget it. I could see, now, that the act wasn't going to be necessary, but I had got steam up for it, so I decided to go ahead. No harm in being on the safe side. I knocked over a glass of milk, and when a new one was brought I promptly knocked that over too, taking care to let it run down on to His suit. Then, as soon as he got back from mopping himself up, I declared that I was hungry and wanted some more fish—that was what we were having that day. There wasn't any more fish, as I perfectly well knew, so I threw a good fit of the sulks and ended up by snatching some from Her plate. Even this didn't rouse them; they clucked a bit, and disapproved, but she didn't even bother to retrieve the fish. It was as if I'd suddenly become invisible, hidden behind the giant bulk of the baby, who hadn't even got himself born yet. Suddenly I couldn't stand it any longer. I let out a succession of piercing yells, shied the stolen fish at Him (it caught him right across the face, I'm glad to say), and generally ran amok. At one point I

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even seized the table-cloth and began dragging at it, hoping to sweep the whole God-damned meal on to the floor, but He was too quick for me. So then, of course, I got a smack, and was put outside the door, and was generally in disgrace until it was time to go back to school. He chauffeured me, again. At first, when we climbed into the car, he was doing his more-in-sorrow I'm-surprised-at-you act, but during the ten minutes it took us to get there he must have decided that I was under strain, first day at school and all that, and he spoke to me gently and said I mustn't try too hard at school but just take things as they came. And when he opened the car door to let me out he gave my arm a squeeze with his big meaty hand. And I walked straight into school and grabbed a ruler and started beating hell out of the kid nearest me, and the teacher grabbed me, and I started yelling, and then suddenly I stopped yelling and threw up all over the floor, before they could get me out of the room, and I remember wishing all the time that I could just throw up my guts once and for all and lie down and die and be rid of the whole bloody business.

* * *

TONIGHT she is bearing the child. I know it although I am not supposed to understand what birth is. They've given me the usual routine: Mummy is going away for a few days. I shall wake up one morning and find her gone. Soon she will be back and I shall have a nice little brother or sister to play with. *Which will it be?* I asked, lying my way through the part of a six-year-old, choking down the black fog of rage and sorrow that crawled up my gullet and tried to burst out of my mouth. *Nobody knows, till she gets there.*

And now, as I lie here, she is getting there. I know tonight is the birth because they took her off at about nine o'clock. He went too, and left some fool of a woman here to look after me. One of the ones She takes me to tea with. Now it's about three in the morning. The woman is asleep downstairs. Several times she has been to the telephone and spoken to the hospital. The last time was about midnight, and I heard her say 'So it's started? Good!'

I lie here twisting like a trapped snake. It's started. This is the birth that should have been me. This child will be normal, I know it. No kink in the time-corridor for him. He'll be nought years

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old tonight, one year old in a year's time, and six when his body grows to be like mine. He'll discover the world gradually, step by step; it will be terrifying, of course, it always is; but at least the world will keep pace with him as he grows up. There'll be no terrible loneliness such as I suffer and must always suffer, and no abyss of fear that what has happened once to me might happen again. The new one will be the right one. They always wanted to breed, to have children to save them from their own ordinariness, to have a miracle bursting in and happening right there in the centre of their lives. What, us? Ordinary? Pig-faced? Dreary? *But we live with a miracle!* And now they've got it. I might have been it, but I was a miracle that went wrong. The old conjurer up there was nodding off to sleep, or thinking of something else: he waved his wand, but he waved it a little too much to one side, or gave it one wiggle too many. Result—a monster. Like a photograph when you forget to turn the film before you take a fresh picture. Blurred, superimposed. A ghost walking on the same plate that records the clear, rehearsed smile of every day. How do I know that? I never handled a camera, I'm too young. I'd break it. How do I know? *How do I know anything?*

But I do, I know things, I know every crevice and corner of this life to which I am being introduced like a hesitant stranger. I am the ghost on the photographic plate. That's Mother at the fountain. And that's Uncle Phil standing by his new car. And who's looking over Uncle's shoulder, walking right through Mother, spoiling the picture? It's me, me, me, me, me. I didn't ask to be a ghost. They made me. Ghosts don't like being ghosts. They just find themselves forced into it when they get superseded. Up to now I've just been a monster, but now I'm a ghost. The baby will take over my life. He has my body, my soul. He is I and not-I. He has come to restore the balance, to provide a baby who shall be a baby all through, not a fake. He is the child they should have had when they had me. He is being born in my stead—but too late! I am here already! They should have labelled him 'Useless if Delayed.' He is coming, savagely fighting his way into the world of air and light, ready to kill or be killed rather than stop his blind, crazy struggle to get out into this world. Go back, you fool! What makes you think it's so good out here? Who told you you'd like it? But it's too late: he's coming—not too late for himself, not too late for Them, but too late for me.

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The earth is spinning aimlessly round the sun, and I am lost. The universe contains no home for me. I cling to the gnarled surface of the earth, I lie here in this bed and think of the millions of miles of frozen darkness between the stars: I might as well be out there. The cold would kill my body, but my mind could not die with it. That neat, predictable timing, that cosy precision, has been denied me. My mind will die when its own independent life-span is over. Where is the body it used to inhabit? Dead and decomposed, or living on without a mind? I keep wondering, but no one can ever tell me. And now the personality that should have been mine is launching itself upon the world. The mother is thrashing and bulging with pain, her eyeballs bursting, her veins cut to ribbons from within. Or she is lying comatose, between spasms, her silent torturer, whom she loves so dearly, choosing his own moment to clutch and rack her anew. She loves him, her bully, perhaps her murderer: the more he savages her, the closer he comes to killing her, the more she loves and wants him. I know it because I am there. If he is I, I am also he. I kick on my bed as she kicks on hers: I am there as well as here: sleek and murderous as a fish, I am forcing my way down that red, blubbery chute: with the fangs of a shark I tear her flesh like wet paper, with the fingers of a baby I caress her skin. My head butts out of her belly, her walls collapse, her veins wilt, she has suffered too much, it is over, she cannot find strength to breathe, she lies back, happy that I have overpowered her. Already I am her son. If she dies now I shall still be her son: her lover, devourer, crucifier: her parasite and saviour.

I am born! He is born! Siamese twins of the spirit: He takes the place that was his from the beginning, and it is time for me to move over, but I cannot: there is nowhere for me to move, not even into death. There is no place for me, even in nothingness: I must stay here in darkness, in solitude, in hatred.

In darkness, because every particle of light that shines on the surface of my body casts its own particle of shadow into the silent centre where I live, shrinking from discovery, hunched over my decaying secret.

In solitude, because I am an outcast, totally and for ever outside the law, hurled into my own damnation beyond the reach even of the simplest and most primal fellowship, that of time.

In hatred, because I hate, I hate, I hate, I hate, I hate.

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Now I am cold. Cold, hard and shiny: I am stainless steel, I am glass, I am metal and chemical. The hysteria has passed. It took time; I was ill for weeks, too ill to be moved, and then I was sent to some kind of children's convalescent hospital. It was a peaceful time; I lay in an iron cot, out of doors. There were other children there, but I could ignore them and just sleep. I needed rest, long weeks of it. I had been trying to contain the emotions of a mature man within the body of a six-year-old, which is impossible. My tender fibres were ripped and split by my hard, spiny feelings. I felt as guilty as a man who sees red and beats a child—only the child I was beating was myself. I savaged my own body till I broke it, reduced it to a pale, scarcely breathing little heap of limpness, pale as the shed skin of an eel, lying trembling and weeping on a cot.

Rest has restored me. Everyone was kind. He came out to see me at week-ends, often, and She came, too, when she could get away. But mostly she had to stay at home with the baby. And now the baby is about six months old. Soon he will be crawling about the floor; already they leave him unattended, in his play-pen, to kick his legs in the summer air and wallow about, glad to be alive and to have limbs that move.

I'm glad he exists. The official theory of my illness connects it with jealousy at the birth of the baby, and they still watch me, anxiously trying to ward off any renewed signs of jealous hatred. But I never give a sign of it. Why should I? I'm grateful to the baby for coming into the world. By doing so, he has solved a problem for me, a moral problem. I am no longer in doubt. I know what I have to do.

Briefly, there is no way for me to go except downwards. The coming of the baby, with his normality, has finally revealed me to myself as a monster. Originally, I hoped that by concealing my unsynchronized intelligence from those about me, by marking time, so to speak, until my body grew up and fell into step with my mind, I might one day cease to be an oddity. With every year that passed I could grow nearer and nearer to a blessed state in which I could lower my guard, say whatever came into my head and begin to take life on normal terms. But now I know that I was idly dreaming. Such bliss is not for me. I am a monster, hurled beyond the bounds of normal human life and condemned to live in a metaphysical wilderness, a dark, tangled place lit only by flashes of red fire. As far as I know, I am alone in this wilderness—but the

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time may come when I shall meet other denizens of it, and then God knows what unimaginably horrible and pitiable beings they will prove to be! Yes, God—that far-off engineer of cruelties, whose ear is stopped to the cries of those he has created only to whirl them beyond the reach of his own memory!

I'm getting carried away. I mustn't. Calm, calm, everything I do and think must proceed from calm and tend towards calm again. Only in that way can I accomplish anything. I know what excited me: the sensation of holding a pencil, writing on these lovely blank pages, after all those months away from it. This notebook is the only friend I have. But what a friend! Always receptive, always patient. I am so eager to talk to it that I scribble away, faster and faster, so impatiently fast that my little hands can hardly form the letters properly and the result looks like some sort of code—but never mind! I can read it, and that is all that matters. There is no one else in my world. Already I find that I'm less and less frightened about the risk of discovery. I used to sweat with fear if I heard anyone moving about in the room where I hide this book: but nowadays, I don't care. I hardly trouble to hide it. The possibility of its being read by other eyes simply isn't real to me. I write myself, for myself to read; the knowledge that these pages exist is the only thing that saves me from that aching corroding loneliness. No, there is one other thing: there is my Plan.

My notebook, and my Plan! My past, and my future! By writing this account of the phases of my suffering, I put my experience into some sort of order, leaving a snail's track behind me that, wavering and tormented as it is, I can still look back on. What lies ahead is chaotic, but what lies behind is at least caught and fixed in some sort of order, held and objectified in the words I have found for it. And my future? At least I can prophesy one thing, that whatever my future contains it will contain my Plan. Nothing short of total annihilation will make me let go of that. It gives purpose to my life, direction to my thoughts, even—at times—a kind of happiness to my misery.

For consider. The moral law, as every thoughtful person knows, is the same as the law of nature. To be true to one's own nature: there is the one basic duty. A man must not behave like a dog, nor a bird like an insect. I, being a monster, must fulfil my destiny, which is to act monstrously, to achieve monstrous things. Before my illness I fell apart under the pressure of trying to decide how

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to view the world, what objects to strive for, and what fulfillment to seek. Now, it is all settled. And here is the perfect instrument, put into my hands. This baby. He will grow up, six years my junior, looking to me as the chief intermediary between himself and the world. A little kindness on my part, and he will love and admire me without reserve. His parents, devotedly as they may watch over him, can never be as close to him as I shall be, for I share his child-nature at the same time as I participate in adult-nature. *He is mine.* And if he is mine, so are He and She. Their happiness is hinged on this one question of how their offspring grow up. Anything is possible: pride, contentment, a rapturous unfolding of new lives, in whose every phase they can share: or misery, humiliation, shame. They already have one monster among their brood, but they shall never know it; I will guard every look, every gesture; nothing shall give me away. No, it is he who will be the monster. I shall mould him into an instrument of their destruction. If ever a completely corrupt human being walked the earth, such—I guarantee it—this child will be. I shall write on the snowy surface of his mind as copiously and as gleefully as I write on these pages. I shall be circumspect: *he* will shock, wound, offend, and finally betray. He will sell his parents into spiritual captivity to buy a handful of scented cachous. He will roll their eyeballs in the gutter for marbles. He will spit into the graves they are patiently digging for themselves. Nothing will be too terrible for him to inflict on them! And I, all the time that I am planning his crimes, suggesting them to him, pushing him gently down the slope whenever I see him falter—I shall be discreet, and smile, and look grave and worried when things go wrong.

This is my Plan. And thus I join battle not with three puny, inoffensive human beings, unworthy of a monster's strength, but with that God who has dared to challenge and affront me!

A fresh start. You'll notice that a great wedge of pages has been torn out. (I say 'you', though even as I write I realize that it steadily becomes more unthinkable that any eye but my own should light on these pages. Still, it seems natural, if one's talking or writing, to *address* somebody. Perhaps the 'you' in question is oneself at a later time; fair enough, if so.) Anyway, two years have gone by since the last entry I've left intact. Slightly more, in fact; the nipper is two-and-a-half, and it's summer time again.

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I *had* to tear those pages out and burn them. They served their purpose, no doubt, at the time they were written; but today, re-reading them, I felt soiled, sticky, humiliated. All that thick, syrupy self-pity! I can see looking calmly back on it, that the last two years have been very hard ones to get over. Sometimes I seem to have been out of my mind, quite literally, for weeks, even months at a time. Fortunately children aren't expected to behave sanely! An adult, under the pressures I've been under, would have been certified and put away. And the verbal vomit, the emotional pus I've suppurated over the pages of this notebook! (In such quantities, by the way, that I shall soon be on Vol. II. What a thought! I can see an infinite shelf of painfully written notebooks stretching away to infinity, every page covered with my sufferings.)

It wasn't exactly disgust, however, that led me to scrap those pages. I realize, for that matter, that I'm no more 'sane', as the word is commonly interpreted, at this moment than during the worst of my raving spells. No nearer, that is, to a normal mental organization, normal motives, normal 'feelings'. My Plan is still with me, cherished and worked out in detail more and more lovingly as time goes by. No, what sickened me about that part of the notebook was the impurity of my feelings. I don't mean 'lustfulness'; I mean, in the chemical sense, that my feelings were impure, contaminated. I wasn't single-minded enough. Time and time again, for instance, I caught myself indulging in fits of sheer jealousy—the kind of black, mountainous jealousy that children suffer from. As if *I*, a grown man in everything but physique, could feel jealous of a squalling, nappy-wetting baby! And yet, many times over, I *was* jealous—that's the fact and I can't get away from it.

Perhaps I ought not to blame myself too much. It's as if there were bits of seven-year-old psychology lurking in odd corners of my being. The contrast between my mature mind and my infantile body isn't a clean-cut one; how could it be? I noticed, years ago, that when She smacked me I couldn't stop myself from wailing just as passionately as a real child. The crying seemed to be geared to my physical system rather than my mental one. And perhaps the same thing applies to this business of jealousy. After all, I have all the physical appetites of a child; I wolf things like cake and blanc-mange, that no self-respecting adult would do more than toy with, and though I know, as a matter of strict fact, that (say) dry sherry is better worth drinking than lemonade, I also know that I

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shouldn't *like* it any better. Condemned as I am to live the life of a small boy with a baby brother, I can't help feeling twinges of the sort of jealousy that such a situation gives rise to.

Very well, I forgive myself; but the pages on which this jealousy had vented itself, so passionately and so copiously, had, all the same, to go into the fire. I must purge myself of these inferior emotions. My intention, which was formed coldly, which grew up in coldness, and which by this time is as hard and bright as a tool forged from stainless steel, is to use this child as the instrument of my vengeance on the universe. That vengeance, which will be a terrible one—as terrible, if I can can make it so, as the initial crime of the universe against me—will necessarily involve the child himself, in the first instance, before it can spread to the parents and thence, through ever-widening circles of metaphysical implication, to God. So, without flinching, I must first make a complete ruin of the child. But I must, at whatever cost in terms of self-control, banish any kind of personal feeling. My hatred is not for the child —not, even, for Him and Her. It is their misfortune that they have been placed within the orbit of my rage. The same devilish spite that ruined me, will ruin them. I can feel the sadness of their plight; in more exalted moments, it strikes me almost as keenly as the sadness of my own. But there is no escape, for them any more than for me.

So of course it follows that I must turn my back on all that pitiful record of childish tears and tantrums. That I should ever have experienced them is one of the plagues an implacable fate has laid on me. But to dwell on them, to allow the record of them to stand even in a notebook which no one else will ever read, is unthinkable.

* * *

A curse, an eternity of curses on this unstable spirit within me! Nobody will ever know, nothing could ever describe, the intensity of my struggle to keep the purity of my vision and the singleness of my motives from blurring and melting into a formless mush. But it seems that, struggle as I may, weakness and multiplicity will creep in; not unawares, but right out in the open, before my very eyes as I struggle with every drop of my energy for strength and singleness!

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Let me put down the pitiful story. A week has passed since I wrote that last entry, making all those high-minded resolutions about impersonality and metaphysical vengeance. And now, so soon, to fall into pettiness and spite, to behave as if it were not the universe, but my little brother, that I hated! To crack, to crumble, just because of an expression in his eyes! But let me pull myself together and calmly write out what happened. At least that will objectify it.

I came back from school this afternoon, feeling, for once, more or less contented. The sun was shining, had been shining all day, and the part of town we live in is pleasant enough, with wide tree-lined streets. I swung in at the gate, eager to dump my school kit and go outside to play for half an hour, before being called in to the table. But as soon as I entered the garden, there he was, my brother, waiting for me. Not only waiting, but standing there as if he'd been rooted to the spot for hours, waiting for me to come home.

He can run about fairly well now, and talk, after a fashion. It's only in the last few months that he's shown much power of connected thought, but lately the development has been quite rapid. Anway, I could see that he was waiting for me and that he had something to show me.

'Itchard!' And he bounded up to me, all shining. (He can't say 'R', so he mostly just leaves it out.) 'Come and see my house!'

I thought at first it was just some figment of imagination; like every child of that age, he seems able to wander across the border into make-believe and back again without knowing he's been away. So I said, to humour him, 'Fine! A great house!' or words to that effect.

'No, no', he said, and began pulling at my wrist. Evidently he really had made something, in another part of the garden, and he wanted me to go and see it.

I made him wait while I took my school satchel inside and hung it up. But, though I didn't hurry, when I came outside he was waiting, dancing up and down with a kind of joyous impatience, and beaming.

'My house! I'll show you!' he piped; not getting the words quite right, but coming close enough for me to understand him.

As we went down the garden path, with my cold, half-disdainful hand in his little eager one, I suddenly felt my heart turn over in

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my chest, like a dying fish leaping up for the last time. A cold heaviness settled on my limbs, and I wanted to lie down, there in the middle of the gravel path, and howl like an animal. It was as if someone had crept up and injected a monstrous dose of some horrible poison into me. Which, of course, was just what had happened. He, my brother, was so full of love for me, so full of joy at seeing me and being able to share with me his triumph at having created something, that he was, quite literally, killing me. Because love, when you don't want it or can't use it, is lethal.

He felt me stiffen and looked up at me, with his eyes full of trust and joyfulness, and it was as if he had sandbagged me. His love for me was burning my skin, choking my veins, bringing my heart to a standstill; every breath I drew was more difficult than the last, because I was gulping down the thick, choking fumes of his love.

Oh, you who happen on this notebook, if anyone by chance should ever do so: you who wonder what kind of feelings pierced and throbbed in this tormented soul, learn from me one lesson, before I am swallowed up! Never, *never* arouse, or permit, love in any being, human or animal, if you cannot love that being in return. Remember this, or you will suffer as I do now—and I say solemnly, against the backdrop of all eternity, that no matter what deeper and darker caverns of misery await me, this is the worst of my agonies!

I didn't collapse on the gravel; it would have been better if I had. But a long habit of self-control forced my limbs onward, and we reached the furthest corner of the garden, a favourite playground for both of us because of the bushes that screened it from view of the house.

We stopped; and there it was, his house. He had searched about until he had found half-a-dozen sticks of more or less equal length, and then leaned them together and put a bit of rag over the top. It looked more like a tent than a house, though you couldn't truthfully say that it *resembled* even that. The sticks were, obstinately, just sticks, and the rag was nothing but a piece of rag. Still, there it was, his house. The first thing he had ever made. And he had waited for me to come home, to show it to me, because he loved me as his brother.

'Look, Itchard!' he crooned, pointing, as if the house were two hundred yards off instead of there in front of us. 'Look!'

I looked. I pictured his trotting about the garden, searching for

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sticks, then having to try about two hundred times before he could get them to stand up in that shape; then going and getting a piece of cloth from the house and draping it over the top. Love! That's what the house expressed: love of the world, of life, love of sticks and bits of rag, love of houses, love of making something, love of breathing and moving about. But, over and above everything, what he was expressing was love of me. He wanted to make something so that he could show it to me and I would be pleased, and I would love him too.

My heart was dead. The sky was black, and rain was falling through the dry, hateful crevices of my heart. I shook his hand from mine, stood motionless for an instant staring at the house he had made, then moved forward slowly and purposefully and trod on it. Poor little house, it didn't take much treading down; the first touch of my foot sent it flying, and the thin sticks cracked under my feet as I stamped up and down on them. I ground the piece of rag into the mud with my heel, and the job was done. No more house. No more love. *How about that, God?*

Then I turned to face him. I knew I was being a fool, because my Plan required that I should gain his confidence, and I ought to have played along with him about the house and everything else, till I could start the job of corrupting his instincts. Cruel disappointments might have to be engineered, but it was quite out of order for me to be obviously the source of them. But I couldn't help myself. Love, as I say, is a deadly weapon when turned against someone who can't reciprocate it; and his love was burning, choking, poisoning me. I wanted him to fly into a rage, to shriek with anger and fly at me with his little fists waving; or, better still, to run sobbing to his mother and get me a good thrashing. At that moment I positively asked for physical punishment: what a liberation it would be, to feel the sharp rhythm of blows on my backside, stinging and scalding, driving out the love that was breaking my heart!

I can hardly write the rest of the story. When I think of it, I feel faint, I tremble and weep. Because,

he didn't
get angry
at all:
he just
stood and

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looked at me with those big eyes that had just been so bright with happiness and now they were all sad and brimming with tears but he didn't say anything and I waited for him to say something and he just stood there and looked at me and then he looked down at what was left of his house that he had been so proud to show me only nothing was left of it nothing I had trodden on it and he still loved me that was the terrible thing he still loved me listen are you there can you hear me God I am coming up there and I am going to spit right in your face because you beat me you threw the one thing at me that nobody can duck. You made me sorry I kicked his house down. I was sorry because he loved me. Nobody can fight against love and that's why I am coming up there God to spit at you because you never fight fair and you have fought me so dirty *with the love that I had to see in his eyes.*

And now it is after tea and he didn't say anything all through tea and he just looked at his plate and She took his temperature because they both thought he must be ill and now I am by myself and everyone is busy She is bathing the little sad one upstairs and He is messing about somewhere and it is over

it is over

when I have written this I am going to go to the kitchen because nobody can fight against love and I have got to fight against it or die so I am going to die and I am going to the kitchen to get the big long sharp carving knife and I am going to drive it into my throat and I hope I cut my head off

it is over

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JOSEPH BENNETT

The Son of Christ

(*dream*)

The Son of Christ
Went mourning, mourning
For his Father was dead
But there was No Body
No Testament
Old or New
Painful, he strives
To recollect his grandsire.
Grandpapa, grandpapa,
Where is your Ghost?
Your Semen?
Invisible radiance,
A Cloud descended over His Head
Bright burnished
Worn tarnished
Newly varnished
The Cup of the Ghost of the Grail.
All gold-glittering
This smithy
All gemmed clustering, sucking
Into that Cup
The lives of mortals,
I give you this New and Eternal Testament
The mystery of Faith
Which for you and for the Many
Shall be Shed
For your Sins
Even to the Beginning of Time,
And the clock ticks.

The clockwork.
Listen.
The clockmaker is Absent.
O dream, dream
Crucified on that Cross

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The Maker, the Doer, the Begetter
Calling his Father
As I call Mine
Seven Last Words
To the Grand' Sire.
And the Temple fell in,
Belshazzar's Feast,
And the Curtain rent from top to bottom
Pilate amazed; Pilate's wife disturbed
Later to undergo psychiatric treatment.
What was the Delusion?
And the eyelids of the world turned down.
What was the radiance,
This Tomb, these simple fishers, joiners, journeymen,
What dreams, what delusions
Of the Crucifix
That awaited all slaves, all aliens
What hymns of Spartacus
What Tomb,
Brilliant, brittle, glassy
Escaping from its gases
The decomposition of the Sun.
A great rock
Hollowed out
Scooped out, scalloped,
For the deposit, the remains, the gobbets
The bled meat
Of my Father.
My Grand'Sire watches,
Grandfather of the earth,
Sublime Ghost,
Holy Dream,
Tenuous, tissue-of-raiment,
Will you rain down into the Cup
The Blood that is your Tears,
Pitiless grandfather,
Merciless progenitor,
Is this Cup the Cup of the Earth
Is it filled with Clay
Is it filled with juice

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The juice of suffering
The bleeding of the grape, the lesions of the bowel
Is it the Cup offered to every Slave on every Cross
Spartacus laughed
When they passed him that Cup.

I will give you War to drink
Said the strange formless Babylonian god
All horns and eyeballs
And I will give you Whores
Said the female Priestess,
Dancing, with her Goddess, lumbering and slow.
This sea, that laps the shores
Of Caesarea and Capharnahum
Is the Maker of Gods
Oysters turtles crabs
Tunny, sea-bettles, night-scarabs
All crawling things
That foist within the Cup
Upon the Tomb.

Why do you seize this Cup
O hungry of the world,
Mal'occhio'd, improvident, evil-eyed,
Covered with sores, propagating,
In rags, copulating, by every Sign of the Sacrament.
In alleys, in huts, beside boats
The Poor lie
Showing red things to each other,
Wallets and gobbets of flesh
Copulating in the gravel like swine
Heedless, import-less beings
Squeezing their juice within the Cup
Of my Father
And his Priests, in lace, betray you
In your desire to avoid childbirth
For that Child came
Dead, dead,
Stillborn into life so cruel
Only the Grand'Sire

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Could have conceived it
With his ridiculous nose
And prophetic, tugging beard
Geppetto to this Pinocchio
Oh I watch, I watch, the carpentry of my Father's birth,
Wood-shavings, dowels, splinters, crude workmanship, badly expressed,
My grand'sire the joiner an incompetent laborer
Fit for the provinces, for trestles and stools
For the peasants, not for the Tetrarchs,
Not for the blood of Antipater
No Greek despot, no satrap, no general,
An ignorant joiner of incapable blocks
Incapable, impotent, unmanned
At last the Ghost came in a cloud
Giving Her ear-trouble
To do what the carpenter cannot

The circumstances of my Father's birth.
But what of my own?

Alas, grandson of a dream, a cloud,
Joined and re-joined by a joiner who learned not joinery,
Geppetto of Pinocchio of Geppetto
Grand'Sire's in a bush, flaming
Grandmother's in blue, ascending.
An ignorant carpenter, incapable
Saw the bush take fire
Saw his wife scream as It hit her ear
Colossal mastoid
Incapable of human endurance
Such suffering
Until she became mad with it and became what she was
Inhuman, out of life, what she was,
His wife, paid, betrothed chattel,
Young
Not good around the house, blue,
Muttering of women
And that day she dropped a Stone
The barn clattered with it

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The rafters, the shutters, three Syrian traders, with caskets
The heavens opened with a clattering of pots
An earthquake
Rafters rumbled
It rained, gusty
Shepherds came, ignorant fellows, humble, good
Asking the trouble
Credulous as their dogs
Who now bit the sheep.

I learn, I listen,
But what of the circumstances, Crucifix, of my visit?
Incisive the flame roared up from my genital organ
My Father dead,
My Grand'Sire?
Rumbling somewhere, inconvenient, distant, preoccupied, unconcerned
Inflicting savage pain for some petty infraction
In some distant land
As it snowed
And rained
And the cattle lowed
And the women wailed
At the Foot of the Cross.
I was born bathed in my Father's blood
Precious, precious,
And my Grand'Sire's silence
And the women's Tears
As the Mother looks on uncomplaining, uncomprehending, in blue
Attentionless, vacant, disturbed by the appearance of clouds in the heavens,
Strong, hard, this tenantless dream in which she is occupied,
Mother of God, waiting Your Assumption.

Who cut your cord umbilical,
Who bled you forth?

It was not my mother, priestess of that instant,
Fierce maenad of an uncompromising cult,

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It was not my mother, amorous Bacchante,
Nor my grandmother, stony-eyed,
Nor my Grand'Sire, absent, aqueous, inter-stellar,
Nor my grandfather, ignorant, stupid joiner,
How did I survive

My mother was dead,
My mother, fierce priestess of the love cult,
Votive hetaira of the Temple, at the top of the Stairs,
Where the Mariners come; all kohl, and veils, nard and essences,
Covered with her unguents
She offered to the passers by
To propitiate them.
And One came.
Now this One she led high into the Temple
And lo, a cloud of radiance spread about them
And she did not spread the unguent within her, the oil, to prevent conception,
But no, arrayed herself
Upon the couch
As for childbirth
And had soft strains played,
And essences and perfumes
And she lay there, legs outstretched
And took Him into her womb
It was as if a thousand suns burst within her
It was as if a Claw pierced her vitals
And her womb became so heavy she was pierced with it
And screamed
And ran off dragging her abdomen behind her
Clutching her pierced womb
Too heavy, too heavy to bear.
And He, who had inflicted this wound upon her,
Retired from the Temple, silent,
Down the steps
To preach to his comrades
And disseminate
The Truth.

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He descended the steps
Where she awaited him, his Mother,
Watching the stars, watching the stairs,
Watching the clouds that brewed and brooded, stone-white, above them

"I hope it is finished," she said, the Mother to the Son,
"I hope it is done. It had to be done. Once. You did it. I hope she is dead. What of the child? No matter. We go on."
And He proceeded to preach, entering the Last Ministry, that led to Golgotha.
And behind him the Temple reared its great height
At the top of the Stairs
And the courtesans waved torches, beckoning,
And within one screamed, for her womb had become heavy as lead
And it dragged her down into Gehenna
And she tried to cut it out,
But could not; the knife blunted against the stone, against flesh which had become stone.
Pierce, pierce, the stone with a knife, if you can,
Handmaiden, it contains the seed of your God.
How different from the sudden ear, the colossal ear-ache that greeted Mary!
And no lilies, no annunciation, no angel.
The temple columns.
Cloistered within
And nine months later, hearing the bruit,
She went to the Mount, for the crucifixion of a slave.
Recognizing Him, that gave her Wound,
She fell at the foot of the Rood and gave birth.

The soldiers laughed in their heavy oiled harness, their sharp swords, their blue-jowled shaven jaws
How they smelt, in their machinery of oil and leather and urine, iron plates hanging down at their shoulders,
How they laughed at the ignorant Hebrews as they jested for my Father's robe, seamless, at dice squatting on haunches upon the ground
At My Father's deathside
And the women clanged the cups

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A soldier with his sharp sword
Cut the cord of birth, where my mother
Struggled to rid me free
To Life
And I thanked Rome for this deliverance
Among the Hebrews
Tiberius I thanked, in his distant villa,
On Capri, above the seas

And the soldiers gave me milk
Bought for me a fruitful slave girl, a black,
And I sucked these nipples
Until far beyond the age of weaning,
And the soldiers weaned me
With the flat of a sharp sword
And I ate parched barley,
Dried corn, a few crusts,
The strong wine, meat when we could get it,
Once, human flesh; anthropophagous among the Dacians
For I lived to fight in Domitian's wars, a general in Trajan's,
I saw Titus carry off the candlestick from the Temple
I heard Hadrian proclaim Aelia Capitolina from the ruins of
my city
And I am not sorry.

Peter I saw, the ignorant fisherman, illiterate,
Crucified in the circus.

I saw Paul the impostor, the epileptic of Tarsus,
Roman citizen much as I was,
Beheaded,
Heard his last peroration
It moved me not.
The soldiers laughed,
His head bounced three times, it is true,
But left no blood, no fountains
He was bitter, circumcised, rancorous,
Destroyed our pleasure in the food we ate.
A great denier . . I said to him:
The Thebaid awaits you; Why do you trouble cities?
Go to the desert where your kind awaits you,

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The beast, the jackal, and the leopard,
Leave us our cities and our games and baths
Before the barbarians come.
Leave us our gladiatorial games.
Leave our slaves alone.
Do not corrupt them, stir them up, so we must crucify them
Crucifixion takes three days, is painful, even upside down it lasts,
Whereas for you, a simple stroke,
A swift cleft of the headsman severs the Roman citizen's fate
He would not listen.
Intoxicated by death, possessed by death,
He led the slaves beyond the land of the living.

I think Peter was sincere.
Of all those old men,
Illiterate, he had slipped himself one night.
Peter, Peter, I had them turn you upside down
To shorten your agony.
Being a slave, I could not kill you quick
I trusted you, in your explanation,
And how you disliked Paul
And how you resented his interference, his arrogance, his literate verbosity
His endless preaching and denials
The time he took the Cup of Wine from your mouth
When you were drunk and fumbling after women
Like my mother
The time when, epileptic as he was, he seized you and made you look within his eyes
And looked within yours
To see if he could see Golgotha.
He did not see! He did not see! you exclaimed.
The day when, epileptic, he arrived by ship
And proceeding up from Puteoli, stopped at Tres Tabernae
The news reached you
And you fled within your catacomb
Hoping he would not find you.
Come out, come out, he said before your hiding place,
In deepest Rome

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Come out, Peter, I see you,
Cowering in the dark,
Come out, Peter, I am Paul, the Disciple,
My flickering candle burns down
And it will soon be out and we alone
Within this trackless desert, these dark and labyrinthine catacombs.

You would not come out, Peter;
You stared within the dark
And that fierce, insane epileptic
Dragged you forth, foaming at the eyes,
And thrust you full upon the ground
And raising the candle stared full upon your eyes
For the first time
To see there what you had seen
On Golgotha
But saw nothing.
But you Peter
Saw that strained insane face
For the first time
And screamed and screamed,
Old man, thrust shoulder-wards upon the catacomb ground
And they pulled the fanatic from you,
Apostle Peter, the Rock upon which the Church was built
And you rose, unforgiving,
As they carried the epileptic away
The secret within your eyes.

I think you saw it,
As Paul never could,
Not only Golgotha, my birth
But also the Tomb
My vacant Grandmother moving in a trance
What do we know?
Peter, that last glimpse of you, head-down
Within the fire

Christ rising from the Tomb
And that blood-drained corpse
Resplendent and free

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Above the Rocks
How I wish for a Tomb
And a real death
For Him who begot me
Why must He live
And I die
All my life I have followed the centurions,
Son of an immortal, Hercules myself,
Must die,
And the Grand'Sire vacant in the heavens
With my Grandmother, untenanted

Yet I saw in Peter's eyes the Truth
That conquers me, product of the lust of a god,
And I wonder, where lies my mother,
Plaything of a moment, hetaira of a god,
Where does she lie,
Grand'Sire, Grandmother, Father in the heavens—

What have you done with that flesh?

Does it lie in some pocket of the hills in Judaea?

I look for a pocket of radiance

Now above me is my Father's gaze
And in the sanctuary they are chanting His praises
The absent lord, the Grand'Sire
Winds up the Heavens
A Smile from the Madonna
Drives the populace wild
A tear from a statue, a cave.
When the Emperor bowed his eagle to the Cross
My Father had won
Through Paul and not through Peter.
The miracle was, that I was born
And here survive, a good Roman.
I still think the games should go on.
I still hold a ticket—sixth seat, in the fifth row, by the sixteenth gate
There were no more Christians,
Demand exceeds supply.

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In my Father's gardens
I often wandered.
With my Grandmother's tenantless stare,
I see this fountain, that arbor,
Those roses,
And I wait.

I wait for a little dust
I wait for a small ticking in the branches
I wait for the clockwork to run out.
Time stopped, the sun must hang.
And we arrested
Become one with the Lord.

Grand'Sire, we needed you,
And you have come.

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W. D. SNODGRASS

Crime for Punishment: The Tenor of Part One

for Kathy

> It's a bad novel. You spend hours on the crime, hours on the punishment and nobody cares about either one.
>
> —*Cornell professor to a committee.*

> A hurtful act is the transference to others of the degradation which we bear in ourselves. That is why we are inclined to commit such acts as a way of deliverance.
>
> —*Simone Weil.*

LATE IN THE NOVEL, when Raskolnikov can live no longer without confessing, he goes to Sonia and tells her that it was he who killed the old woman money-lender and her sister. For seconds Sonia is silent with shock and horror. Then, throwing herself to her knees before him, she cries, "Oh, what have you done to yourself?"[1]

There can be few moments of more dazzling illumination. Yet, it takes Raskolnikov only a few seconds to cloud the issue completely, to tangle both Sonia and himself in a huge web of pseudo-motives: he wanted to prove himself a superman, beyond authority; he wanted the old woman's money for a grandiose humanitarian scheme; he wanted to be independent of his impoverished mother; he merely wanted to prove that he had "the courage to dare." Though each of these has its truth, each reveals something of Raskolnikov, none is finally convincing either to the characters or to the author. Unfortunately, Raskolnikov's rationalizations have confused most of his critics almost as completely as himself.[2] Raskolnikov never discovers his basic motive; none of the other characters suspect it, excepting only Porfiry, the chief inspector. Porfiry, recognizing Raskolnikov's desire for punishment, first preaches to him the need for confession, then makes that confession possible by setting an example—by dropping his tone of accusation and, himself, confessing first to Raskolnikov:

[1] Part V, Ch. ii. All quotations are from the translation by David Magarshack.

[2] From this remark I should exclude Avrahm Yarmolinsky, whose analysis in *Dostoievsky: His Life and Art* hints strongly at the interpretation here offered.

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> "I frankly confess—for if I am to confess I may as well confess everything—that it was I who was the first to suspect you. . . . I'm afraid I've caused you a lot of suffering. . . . I consider you in any case. . . . a most honorable man. . . . I want . . . to show you that I am a man who possesses feelings as well as a conscience. I mean it."[3]

This change to a tone of dignified sympathy and respect for Raskolnikov is crucial; in making it, Porfiry advances from the role of chief inspector into the roles of the priest and father who can help Raskolnikov regain self-respect through, first, confession and, next, punishment or "suffering." I take it, then, that Raskolnikov's original motive in murder was to achieve punishment.

"Never tell the reader the real motive," said Dostoievsky; how admirably he follows his own precept! He was thoroughly aware that such a motive might exist. In a letter to his publisher, Katkov, he suggested this motive for Raskolnikov:

> . . . I find it difficult to explain my idea. My novel, besides, contains the hint that the punishment laid down by the law frightens the criminal much less than our legislators think, partly because he himself feels the desire to be punished.[4]

Further, in the novel itself, Dostoievsky offers this motive for the crimes and confessions of lesser characters. Nikolay the painter (who resembles Raskolnikov in coming from the province of Ryazan and who is, moreover, a "Raskolnik" or "Old Believer") confesses to Raskolnikov's crime because of a religious compulsion to "accept suffering." Again, an unnamed prisoner, whom Porfiry implicitly compares to Raskolnikov, read his Bible so well that he threw a brick at the governor in order to get more punishment, yet "deliberately missed . . . to make sure he did him no injury."[5]

Yet, if Dostoievsky is conscious of such motives, why *not* tell the reader? First, Dostoievsky usually reveals the greatest truths when he works by hints and indirections. Second, he would be even more reticent than usual about stating abstractly and conspicuously an idea which most readers would then have thought merely absurd. Finally, this novel has a very large autobiographical element; he must have felt not only a literary, but a personal reticence.

In the Autumn of 1866, when he began work on *Crime and*

[3] Part VI, Ch. 2.

[4] Quoted by Magarshack in his Introduction to the novel.

[5] Here Dostoievsky strengthens and openly asserts an interpretation for this incident which he had previously only suggested when handling the same incident for *The House of the Dead*.

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Punishment, Dostoievsky's circumstances were remarkably like those of his hero. Having unnecessarily assumed great debts, he went to Wiesbaden to gamble. There, he had lost all he had and all he could borrow. He had pawned his wardrobe and valuables, then had been cheated on an object he especially loved by a woman pawnbroker. When he could not keep up room rent, he was abused by the hotel manager and the waiters who (like the landlady and the maid in the novel) would not deliver any food except tea, "because he didn't deserve it." The servant who watched him at night reported that he had "murder on the mind." Thus, his own Wiesbaden situation, though translated into the terms of his earlier life in St. Petersburg,[6] is carried directly into the novel as the situation of the student, Raskolnikov. There, it is offered as one of the factors leading *him* to murder. Yet, it is not misfortune or poverty which are decisive; they occur to most of us with no such drastic result. The crux lies in the protagonist's reaction to those difficulties.

It is hardly surprising, then, that Dostoievsky hesitates to offer, abstractly, a motive which might be so damaging to his readers' (or his own) opinion of himself. Yet, with steady insistence and with overwhelming insight, he does demonstrate and dramatize throughout the novel just such a belief. And, after all, it is the special business of a novel to recreate the texture of living, not necessarily to explain it.

The special business of the first Part of *Crime and Punishment* is to recreate the circumstances in which a man will commit murder. If, as most critics suppose, this novel aimed only to show remorse *after* crime, then Part I (events before and during the crime) would be extraneous. Yet the removal of Part I, or even of that portion which precedes the murder, would terribly damage the book. This is true simply because the action of Part I accounts for the murder, which is its climax, far better than any of the rationalizations later offered either by the murderer or by the novelist.

Establishing the motive, however, does more than merely account for the murder; in large part, it accounts for the whole structure of the novel. First, nearly all Raskolnikov's later actions depend upon his first great decision—to kill Alyona Ivanovna. Second, only if we understand Raskolnikov do such secondary characters as Marmeladov, Luzhin and Svidrigaylov fall into

[6] Cf. Alberto Moravia, "The Marx-Dostoievsky Duel," *Encounter,* November, 1956.

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proper perspective. Their torments are not incidental displays of horror, but sidelong analyses of Raskolnikov himself. Third, this motive (the desire to achieve a punishment which will reinstate him as a worthy member of a moral universe)—this motive complements and clarifies the doctrine of suffering put forward by Sonia and Porfiry. Finally, it accounts for Raskolnikov's second great decision, the climax toward which the book so carefully builds. It explains why Raskolnikov cannot commit a perfect crime, why he must blunder, must flirt with capture and, finally, confess. To escape would defeat the very purpose of the murder.

To trace the workings of this motive, I will investigate here the action of Part I. I will follow the strict narrative sequence of the book, interrupting that sequence only when its events can be more clearly understood in the light of later events, or of events from Dostoievsky's life. I do hope, however, that these comparisons may throw some light upon the meaning and structure of the book as a whole.

The opening scene—Raskolnikov sneaking past the kitchen of his landlady, Pashenka—is more important than one at first suspects. His discomfort—he owes rent for a shabby little fifth floor room—is of a kind we usually think amusing or trivial. Besides, Raskolnikov himself wants to believe that these actions and feelings are not significant. He tries to tell himself that he is terrified to meet Pashenka merely because he does not want to "listen to all that dreary nonsense which [does] not concern him at all," that he has "lost all interest in matters that [require] his most immediate attention," and, finally, in a kind of comic paranoia, that he is "not in the least afraid of his landlady, whatever plots she might be hatching against him." Though at first reading, such a view of Pashenka may seem reasonable, by the time one reaches Part III, it should be clear that this is palpable nonsense. As Razumikhin will demonstrate, Pashenka is pleasant enough—shy, pliable, even generous, when well-handled. Raskolnikov has chosen not to face her, explain his position and ask decent treatment. Instead, he hides from her, aggravates his debt, lets her injure him and pockets the injury in silence. It is, after all, a sort of comfort to be plotted against.

Nonetheless, Raskolnikov cannot convince himself that this "dreary nonsense . . . does not at all concern him." He is obsessed by it. The words "shame" and "fear" recur to him again and again.

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He has a "sickening sensation of terror which [makes] him feel ashamed. . . . His fear . . . surpris[es] even himself." We must not let him convince us—as he tries constantly to convince himself—that he is indifferent or callous, that he lacks conscience. He has, if anything, too much. At any rate, his conscience drives him the wrong way—away from people, away from any solution. He has withdrawn not only from Pashenka, but from everyone, been almost totally "absorbed in himself . . . lying about all day long in that beastly hole and thinking . . . talking to himself . . . amusing himself by indulging in fantastic dreams." This is partly because he *is* aware of guilt and debt. This debt and his response to it—the first of a long series of similar situations in the book—is a sort of trap into which he is slipping further and further. At this point, we needn't decide how much Raskolnikov himself has devised his trap; he is caught and is furious.

The scene which follows on the streets of St. Petersburg develops further these conflicting feelings of shame and rage, withdrawal and violence. We notice, first, Raskolnikov's intense isolation as he passes through the crowded streets "in a kind of coma," self-absorbed and talking to himself. In any *literal* sense, he is almost entirely cut off from the life around him. Yet, symbolically, he is very much at one with it. "The proximity of the Hay Market, the great number of disorderly houses, and most of all, the working-class population which crammed into these streets and alleyways . . . the unendurable stench from the pubs," the drunkards and prostitutes—all suggest Raskolnikov's sense of internal corruption. The crowds of people, the "summer stench," the heat and the dusty, stifling air, all suggest Raskolnikov's own constriction and compression, the rage and filth he has shut up inside himself. This sense of stifling constriction will continue unrelieved almost to the end of the novel—until the rain breaks during that night when Svidrigaylov is on the brink of suicide, and Raskolnikov on the brink of confession. It is Raskolnikov's sense of disgrace which, now, hangs over the whole scene. The squalor he sees is mainly an objectification of the degradation he feels; the disgust he expresses for those around him, mainly an expression of self-disgust. To resolve this ambivalence in Raskolnikov's view of the street, and his corresponding preference for just such scenes of degradation, would lead us farther afield than we can go at this time.

There is another ambiguity which is more obvious and more

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pressing. We have never been quite sure why Raskolnikov acts so stealthily—because of shame that he cannot pay his rent and is shabbily dressed, or because he is doing something disgusting or criminal? This ambiguity becomes specially noticeable when Raskolnikov sees a drunkard, being carried in a "huge empty cart drawn by an enormous dray-horse," who suddenly points at him and shouts, " 'Hey, you there, German hatter!' . . . The young man at once stopped in his tracks and clutched nervously at his hat." We suppose that Raskolnikov, sensitive and refined, is embarrassed by ridicule. Dostoievsky at once corrects us:

> But it was not shame, it was quite another feeling, a feeling that was more like fear, that had overtaken him.
>
> "I knew it!" he muttered in confusion . . . "it is just such an idiotic thing, such a trivial detail, that could ruin the whole plan! Yes, I'm afraid my hat is too noticeable . . . people might remember it, and there's your clue."

For the first time, we know that this "rehearsal" of the "plan" does involve something actively criminal. This ambiguity is important, for the criminal violence of the murder rises directly from the other side of the ambiguity—from Raskolnikov's sense of shame and personal disgrace. So also, this chapter's movement from the stealth of shame to the stealth of violence is highly significant for the same reason.

Having slipped past Pashenka and gone like a sleep-walker through the crowded streets, Raskolnikov arrives at the house of the usurer, Alyona Ivanovna. Here, he repeats the pattern of the first scene—but with very significant differences. Once again we see him slipping past the caretakers; this time he sneaks *up* the stairs, not *down* them. Earlier, we have seen him in debt to his landlady; now we see him setting up another debt to another woman, Alyona Ivanovna. But this debt will trap *her,* not him. We must never forget his real purpose in this visit. As he must remind himself, he is not pawning his watch for money, he is putting himself in debt in order to rehearse the murder. No causal relation is stated between the scene at the landlady's and the scene at the pawnbroker's; one is easily felt: Raskolnikov will kill his pawnbroker *partly* in revenge against his landlady; the rage withheld from Pashenka will gather interest and destroy Alyona Ivanovna. Incidentally, this relationship between the landlady and the pawnbroker also partly explains why, later in the novel, immediately

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after he has killed the pawnbroker, Raskolnikov has a nightmare in which the Assistant Superintendent of Police beats Pashenka. As Nastasya, the maid, tells him:

> "That was your blood making a noise inside you. It always does that when it can't come out and it starts getting clotted up in your liver. That's when you start seeing things."

In part, this nightmare is one interpretation of motive for the murder just preceding it: the murder was one way of beating Pashenka. This linkage between the two women will need development later; now we need only note that Raskolnikov is indebted to both and has fantasies of violence against both.

I have remarked that Pashenka is a fairly reasonable and generous woman; whatever may be said of Alyona Ivanovna, she is certainly neither of *those* things. She is, in fact, all the vicious things Raskolnikov would like to think of Pashenka. That may be why he chose her. He knew her bad qualities from the beginning and detested her from the first moment he saw her,[7] yet he decided to do business with her. No one can say whether he could have found a better pawnbroker. But this much is certain: it is essential that his victim *be* a pawnbroker, a money-lender, a collector of debts; that she be old, ugly, vicious; that she mistreat her sister, Lisaveta. These qualities "justify" the crime he has so long been planning. Now, in the present scene, she cheats him; gives him an unfair price for a pledge of great sentimental and symbolic value—his only memento of his father, a silver watch with the globe engraved on its back. He can hardly be surprised that she cheats him; he would surely have been surprised—and, perhaps, disappointed—if she had not.

If Chapter 1, then, is a rehearsal and prediction of the violence Raskolnikov will commit, Chapter 2 is a premonition of the passivity he embodies. Having rehearsed the murder, having turned at least one of his fantasies into something approaching a reality, his rage is momentarily eased; he feels hungry for company, for humanity. Stepping into a tavern, he sees Marmeladov, and is drawn to him "from the very first moment . . . before a word had been spoken . . . he even explained it as a kind of presentiment." Marmeladov, too, finds Raskolnikov a kindred soul. He launches at once upon a flood of self-hatred and self-pity: his wife is ill, the children hungry; he has lost job after job by drinking, filching the

[7] Cf. Chapter 6.

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money from his family; the neighbors beat his wife and he dare not interfere; his wife beats him and has driven his daughter, Sonia, to prostitution; Sonia has been forced out of their lodgings. On and on: an astounding self-display of mismanagement, abasement, bathos.

However much we want to weep for Marmeladov, still something in us wants to join with the tavern loungers and jeer. He has so deliberately chosen all of his miseries, and chosen them to flaunt before us. Again and again, he has been offered work and its rewards; he does not want them, deliberately throws them away. Why, then, take a position at all? Why not lie around the house all day; why not beg or steal; why not wander away? Such reasonable approaches would save him most of his troubles. This is exactly what's wrong with them. Imagine the loss: if he stopped "trying" to hold a position, no wife would make sacrifices to help him, grow excited and hopeful when he seemed to reform, be happy and affectionate when he brought home his check, then, when he threw away the job and the better life he had dangled under her nose, tear her hair and beat him. Next, if he had not lost the job and his wife's affection, strangers could no longer sympathize with him about his strange compulsion, about his cruel wife. The strangest thing about this compulsion is that even he knows its source:

> "That's why I drink, for it is in drink that I'm trying to find sympathy and compassion. It is not happiness but sorrow that I seek. I drink, sir, that I may suffer, that I may suffer more and more."

He has been most appallingly successful at that.

No doubt his marriage *is* painful. One must agree with Raskolnikov, when he meets Katerina Ivanovna later in the chapter, that she is "certainly . . . not the right sort of wife for Marmeladov." She does not want a husband; she wants someone to blame life on. Her every motion is an accusation against her husband, her neighbors, against the whole world for mistreating her. Later in the book, this will culminate in the grotesque display of herself and her children begging under the windows of the supposedly callous officials who (she will convince herself) have injured and starved her family. But it appears most concisely and far-reachingly in this very chapter, where she delivers her curse: "Damn, damn, damn this life." *She* has been all too successful at that.

She is at least as subtle a technician as Marmeladov, and her

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methods are destroying her almost as quickly. She has become ill; her consumption (like Anna Petrovna's, in Chekhov's *Ivanov*) may be seen as another accusation of her husband. Whether or not she originally so intended it, her illness certainly has *become* an accusation—both for her, and for Marmeladov:

> "It's her eyes I'm afraid of—her eyes. And also the red spots on her cheeks and—her breathing. Have you ever noticed how people with her illness breathe when—when they are excited?"

It is worth noting, incidentally, that this is a literary portrait of Dostoievsky's first wife, who had died of consumption in 1864 after a long illness involving much neglect and blame, and to whom he felt very guilty indeed. It is also worth noting that throughout his life, Dostoievsky often bungled his affairs to punish himself and those around him for a variety of guilts.

The worst sort of wife—for anyone. Yet Marmeladov chose her; and with adequate warning. Her first husband had died, leaving her in the provinces with no way to support her children. Marmeladov, thinking he pitied her, offered to marry her. Instead of being relieved and grateful, she went to the altar "weeping and sobbing and wringing her hands." Surely that would have scared off any man concerned for his own preservation, any man who did not want to crucify himself in a marital contest of injury collecting. I have suggested that Raskolnikov wanted a bad pawnbroker; Marmeladov certainly wants a bad wife.

He is now very skillfully making her worse—shrewish, parasitic and violent. He knows that his own deepest need is for understanding:

> "And He will stretch forth His arm to us, and we shall fall down before Him and we shall weep. And we shall understand all . . . and all will understand, and my wife, too, my wife, will understand. Lord, thy kingdom come!"

Yet he does not ask for understanding, but rather pity:

> "Oh, if only she'd take pity on me! For surely, surely, my dear sir, every man ought to have at least one place where people take pity on him!"

That demand for pity amounts to an accusation. The accusation, in turn, makes her less able to understand. Besides, consider Marmeladov's claims for pity: first, that he has thrown away job after job to torment her; second, that she is a monster. How should

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she sympathize with *those* complaints? Besides, she must always have been completely absorbed in self-pity, even before those injuries which he actually has heaped upon her. What hope of pity from her? Or of understanding? It is more practical to seek disapproval and punishment; they are her chief stock in trade and, further, his habitual demand:

> "I like her to pull me by the hair . . . I'm not afraid of blows. Lord no. For you must know, sir, that far from hurting me, such blows are a real pleasure to me. I can't do without them. It's better like that. Let her beat me."

It takes much abuse to replace even a little affection. And, if she beats him, he can at least feel punished for his "chronic destitution," for starving his family, cruelly tricking his wife, punished for her flushed cheeks and labored breathing.

Yet, at the very same time, when she beats him he collects a new injustice from her—one which he can display in the taverns and streets to anyone who will listen and perhaps supply a pity to match and confirm his own flagrant self-pity. Yet even this does not exhaust the possibilities for manipulating the balance sheet. This new injury and abuse (even though he, quite as much as she, has sought and caused it) may, after enough self-pity has been brought to bear upon it, become an excuse for his next "failure." And so the cycle is perpetuated.

We must never miss the ambivalences of Marmeladov's story. Though couched in the language of a confession, whose aim is understanding, it is really an accusation meant to condemn his wife, justify himself, and so gain pity. He openly abases himself at every moment and has only praise and respect for his wife. Yet, how deftly he paints her as trivial, greedy and vicious; himself as victimized. His own faults seem mild by comparison, especially since he both "confesses" so readily and tries so hard to "excuse" *all* her faults:

> "She can't help herself, I'm afraid. It's her character, you see."

No man in his right mind could consider that a mitigation! He has, in short, heaped coals of forgiveness upon her.

Marmeladov's techniques center around an almost invincible parody of Christian humility. If his techniques of telling his story should fail, if he should be jeered by his hearer in the tavern, that too can be turned to his advantage—that can serve as another

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punishment and another martyrdom to display to his next audience. For he *will* die a martyr. If Raskolnikov will not supply the requisite pity, he will find it—of all places—in Heaven:

> "It's not on earth but up there that they grieve over people and weep, but they never blame them, they never blame them! And that hurts more . . . And He who takes pity on all men will also take pity on me, and He who understands all men and things, He alone, He too, is the judge."

His final self-aggrandizement is an attempt to identify his own self-induced and rancorous martyrdom with that of Christ:

> "Behold the man! . . . I don't deserve any pity. I ought to be crucified —crucified, and not pitied. But crucify him, O judge, crucify him, and having crucified him, have pity on him! Then I, too, will come to you to be crucified; for it's not joy I thirst for, but sorrow and tears!"

They do not seem hard to find. For a year, the marriage had gone well enough. But at the first appearance of trouble, when Marmeladov lost his job because of personnel changes in his office, all the destructive possibilities of the marriage took control. Moving from place to place, their agonies have grown steadily sharper. When we first see them, (in the present chapter), they have lived in St. Petersburg for sixteen months and have brought themselves to a horrifying pitch of degradation. Within the course of the novel —not more than a few weeks—both will die. First, Marmeladov will step in front of a cart to find the death which even his wife will recognize as "what he asked for." Then she will complete her own destruction by conspicuous suffering and disease. Their deaths are the natural culmination of their techniques; final acts of blame against their world and each other.

Though at first Raskolnikov and Marmeladov seem completely opposite—Raskolnikov, self-aggrandizing, aggressive, murderous; Marmeladov, self-abasing, passive, suicidal—they are ultimately similar. We have already moved far into the Raskolnikovian element of Marmeladov's character. And Raskolnikov will come, finally, to see in Marmeladov a large part of his own soul, and to be deeply affected by that recognition. But for the moment it is Marmeladov's family which moves him—moves him to pity. As he goes, he leaves them all the change he has in his pocket.

This is the first of Raskolnikov's several attempts to save his self-respect, to prove himself good, through charity. This time, how-

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ever, any self-approval he might have gained is soured immediately by the recollection that he has no money, that this gift to the Marmeladovs helps to impoverish his own mother and sister. Ironically, his act of charity has only thrown him deeper into the guilt he was trying to escape. He smiles sardonically at the Marmeladovs' victimization of Sonia:

> What a girl! What a gold mine they have found! And they are making jolly good use of it! Took it for granted. Wept bitter tears and got used to it! Man gets used to everything—the beast!

We recall that Marmeladov had frequently called himself a beast. We do not recognize until the next chapter that Raskolnikov is calling himself a beast for victimizing his own mother and sister. His judgement upon Marmeladov, his judgement upon Man, is only a reflection of his opinion of himself.

Chapter 3 has several crucial functions. Not the least of these is the inter-relating of Chapters 1 and 2, and of their heroes. I have noted that, at first, Raskolnikov and Marmeladov, as character types, seem diametrically opposed. The same may be said of the two chapters which present them: Raskolnikov's rehearsal of the murder seems to have nothing to do with Marmeladov's recital of his self-destruction. In the novel as a whole, these two thematic problems, murder and suicide, are ultimately related and joined by the psychological and religious doctrine that Raskolnikov's hatred of others is only a reflection of his self-hatred, that the murder he commits is actually a blow struck against himself, and so a form of suicide. But now, immediately, these two chapters are related and resolved by Chapter 3, which reveals and explores the basic similarities of Raskolnikov and Marmeladov and suggests that underlying (and causal to) Raskolnikov's apparent viciousness lies a deeper passivity and self-destructiveness.

In the tavern the day before, Raskolnikov had heard the bartender shout at Marmeladov:

> "And why ain't you working? . . . why ain't you got a job seeing as how you're a civil servant?"

Next morning, at the beginning of Chapter 3, the maid Nastasya brings Raskolnikov some tea and asks him:

> "Why are you asleep? It's almost ten o'clock. . . . why does a clever man like you lie about like a sack of coals, of no use to himself or

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> anybody else? You used to give lessons to children before, didn't you? Well, why is it you do nothing now?"

When he answers that he is "doing something . . . working . . . thinking," she only laughs convulsively, just as the drunkards had laughed at Marmeladov. Raskolnikov, however, compares her not only to the drunkards, but to something much more intimate. She says nothing but what has constantly been in his own mind. We have already heard him scolding himself:

> I talk too much because I do nothing . . . Lying about all day long in that beastly hole and thinking . . .

Now he answers Nastasya "reluctantly and sternly . . . as though in answer to his own thoughts," for she has lined up with his conscience against him.

Raskolnikov has just failed, at the end of Chapter 2, in one attempt to save himself from his conscience; his gift to the Marmeladovs backfired. Now, Nastasya's answers are driving him back further, step by step, into a corner:

> "You shouldn't bite the hand that feeds you, sir . . . You don't want to get rich all at once, do you?"

He answers truthfully that he *does* want to get rich all at once; he does not admit the whole truth—that he wants terribly to bite the hand that feeds him and that if he can't get rich all at once, he'd rather starve. It's hard to say those things to one's conscience. Nastasya, at any rate, has made the normal blunder: Raskolnikov, because he felt guilty, hopeless and helpless, has created a bad situation; now she makes him feel more guilty, hopeless and helpless *because* of the situation. He will spend the next several chapters trying to answer the charge she has given voice to, trying to prove that he is of some use to someone and to himself. Yet anything Nastasya could say is trivial compared with the weight of guilt she carries into Raskolnikov's room in a letter from his mother.

This letter has one function already suggested—revealing the similarities between Raskolnikov and Marmeladov. At the same time, it has several more obvious functions. First, it gives the reader much essential information about past events, about the context of forces which have brought Raskolnikov to the tormented and murderous state of mind we have seen. Again, it introduces

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characters of greatest importance for the later development of the novel—Dunia, Luzhin, Svidrigaylov. Aside from this, however, the letter has a vital dramatic function in its effect upon Raskolnikov: it not only explains his past torments, but cruelly tightens those torments in upon him, and so impels him, very much more drastically, on toward the murder.

Raskolnikov has waited two months for this letter; he must anticipate at least some of its bad news. He should know his mother well enough to expect some of her self-sacrificing tone, some of the implications of his unworthiness, some of the hidden accusations. Yet he must also have hoped to be spared at least some of the disgrace which the letter heaps upon him. Compared to these coals of forgiveness, the techniques of the Marmeladovs seem childish and heavy-handed. Like Marmeladov's wife, Raskolnikov's mother accuses everything around her; like Marmeladov, she knows how to impart a tone of deepest blame and disapproval while using terms of approval and open praise. At every moment she appears to be praising her son. She has learned the tender motherly art of introducing each item of accusation as if it were a matter of praise for her son or blame for herself. Thus she is able to insinuate as much blame as she likes without once relinquishing a convincing tone of saintly unselfishness and concern for others.

The letter begins with what looks like praise of her son, but is actually a demand that he take immediate action, a reminder that everything depends upon him:

> you are our only hope of a better and brighter future.

Then, under pretence of accusing herself, she confronts him with his own past failures:

> You can't imagine what I felt when I learned that you had left the university some months ago because you hadn't the means to keep yourself and that you had lost your lessons and had no other resources.

Next, under color of excusing her failure to help him (while actually drawing attention to *his* failure to help *her*), she makes a long list of all the past debts which she and Dunya have incurred on his account: she, by borrowing against her widow's pension; Dunya, by taking an advance against her wages as governess to the Svidrigaylovs. As a result, the mother has had to live in great hardship, while Dunya was forced to remain at a post where she was

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subjected first to the brutalities, then to the lustful advances of Svidrigaylov, and finally to his wife's campaign of character assassination. Both debts have been traps, and both were contracted for Raskolnikov's sake.

Having reminded Raskolnikov of these past sacrifices made for him, his mother turns to reveal the new plans she and Dunya have made: Dunya is to marry Peter Luzhin, a civil counsellor. The duplicity which I have been noting in the mother's tone is especially useful to her here. Thus, beneath her open defense of Luzhin, she is able to convey a feeling of great distaste:

> It is true he is forty-five years old, but . . . I daresay women might still find him attractive. He is altogether a highly respectable and dignified man, though perhaps a little morose and overbearing. But quite possibly that is only the first impression he makes on people . . . He said a lot more, for he seems a little vain and he likes people to listen to him, but this is hardly a vice.

If she really wanted to reassure her son, she would scarcely think out loud so often and so very pointedly; neither would she make it so plain to him that she expects him to object to Luzhin and the proposed marriage:

> And, please, Roddy dear, I must ask you not to judge him too hastily and too heatedly when you meet him . . . as I'm afraid you're all too likely to do . . . I'm saying this, dear, just in case, for I'm quite sure that he will make a good impression on you. And besides to get to know any man properly one must do it gradually . . .

One can't imagine a more effective way of setting two men against each other. Again, she is able to convey to Raskolnikov a complete lack of hope for happiness in the marriage:

> There is of course no special love either on her side or on his, but Dunya is a clever girl and as nobleminded as an angel, and she will consider it her duty to make her husband happy, and he too will probably do his best to make her happy, at least we have no good reason to doubt it, though I must say the whole thing has happened rather in a hurry.

Raskolnikov's mother has, of course, very good "reason to doubt it," as she immediately goes on to demonstrate. She knows perfectly well Luzhin's motive in the marriage and that this cannot possibly work toward Dunya's happiness:

> even before meeting Dunya he had made up his mind to marry some honest girl who had no dowry . . . for, as he explained, a husband

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> should never be under any obligation to his wife for anything, . . . it seemed just to have slipped out in the course of the conversation, so that later he even tried to correct himself and make it sound much nicer.

She is aware, then,—and makes Raskolnikov aware—that Dunya is being sold into a hopeless slavery where she will be controlled by debt to Luzhin. Not only does the mother expect Dunya to be miserable; she expects nothing better for herself:[8]

> it would perhaps be much better if I lived on my own after their wedding . . . I am quite sure he will be so nice and considerate as to ask me himself to live with them so as not to be separated from my daughter and that, if he has said nothing about it so far, it is simply because no other arrangement has even occurred to him.

This amounts to a proclamation that both she and Dunya are to be sacrificed once more. And she leaves no ground for mistake about who is to bear the blame for the sacrifice:

> He has been practising law for many years and . . . he may, therefore, . . . be very useful to you, too, in lots of ways; in fact, Dunya and I have already decided that even now you could start on your career . . . We have even ventured to drop a few words about it to Mr. Luzhin . . . We, of course, were very careful not to say anything about . . . our great hopes that he would help us to advance you some money for your university studies . . . or about your becoming his partner.

This is, in itself, quite bad enough, quite enough of a threat to Raskolnikov's conscience. His sense of indebtedness is already almost unbearable. This new plan threatens to hurl him far deeper still. But what is worse, there is no faintest hope that this scheme could work. Even his mother knows that; and she lets him know it:

> he did immediately express some doubts as to whether your university studies would leave you much time for work at his office . . . in spite of Mr. Luzhin's present quite understandably evasive attitude . . . Dunya is firmly convinced that she will be able to arrange everything.

Even the briefest reflection, or the first glimpse of Luzhin, would convince anyone of the patent folly of this plan. Small wonder that (in the next chapter) Raskolnikov will cry out "Are they blind, both of them, or don't they notice anything on purpose? And how

[8] This is the only detail which I have displaced from its original place in the letter's sequence of ideas and details.

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pleased they are!" Raskolnikov seems to suspect that this plan was deliberately chosen just because it *was* such a bad plan, and so could bring more guilt and dependency down upon his head. Whether true or not, Raskolnikov must *suspect* some such motive; whether intended or not, that will be the plan's effect. He surely feels that he has previously been trapped into debt to his mother and sister. Now they, and he with them, are to be indebted to Luzhin. And Luzhin is clearly all the things he could suspect (correctly or not) about his family—an underhanded tyrant who manipulates people through the debts he can collect against them.

The marriage arrangements completed, Luzhin has sent for Dunya and Mrs. Raskolnikov to come to St. Petersburg, though he has given only the barest minimum of help with their trip, so as to humiliate them. (He later recognizes this as his greatest tactical blunder; if he had given them money, he could have controlled their consciences.[9]) The imminent arrival of his mother and sister is perhaps the worst news of all for Raskolnikov: he will have to face directly these two women who have made themselves his victims, whom he has injured, and who seem intent upon suffering more for him, upon deepening that guilt that he is already frantic to escape. A mere letter from them has brought him all the blame he can bear, not only of the sorts I have outlined, but a whole battery of unconscious and disguised reproaches, besides:

> not only do I hate the idea of being in any way a burden to anyone, but I myself want to be entirely independent so long as I still have something to live on, and such children as you and Dunya.

The mother closes her letter, then, with an intimation of how fearful is the sacrifice Dunya is to make, and (as at the beginning of her letter) a reminder that everything depends upon Raskolnikov, a demand that he take some sort of immediate action:

> Love Dunya, Roddy. Love your sister. Love her as she loves you, and remember she loves you very much, much more than herself. She is an angel, and you, Roddy, are all we have in the world, our only hope of a better and brighter future. If only you are happy, we shall be happy.

Small wonder that Raskolnikov hates them both; that he is more miserably unhappy than ever, that he rushes out into the streets "muttering and even talking aloud to himself, to the astonishment of the passers-by, many of whom thought he was drunk."

[9] Part V, Ch. 1.

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The parallel to Marmeladov is clear, even to the suggestion of drunkenness. Raskolnikov too, is being destroyed by accumulated guilt and debt to his dependents, again an older and a younger woman, though in his case a mother and sister, not a wife and daughter. And the parallel is extensive. Just as Marmeladov has sold his sick wife's shawl and stockings for drink, Raskolnikov has accepted an advance on the pension of his aging and sick mother. The comparison of Dunya to Sonia is even stronger. Sonia became a prostitute to support the Marmeladov family, so filling the gap of Marmeladov's failure; thereupon Marmeladov, refusing to be helped, took her earnings for drink. Similarly, Dunya has just escaped what was very like prostitution (governess to the Svidrigaylovs), only to be sold into something much nearer prostitution (marriage to Luzhin); Raskolnikov, refusing to be helped, has left the university and given up his pupils. Both men have refused any intermediate position; if they cannot support their family, they will hang helplessly upon them, until they drag them to the ground. At least one of these men has deliberately set the standard of success impossibly high, so as to retain his failure and the position of the dependent child.

So far, I have compared Raskolnikov's mother to Marmeladov's wife; Marmeladov's wife makes openly the accusations which Raskolnikov's mother only implies. (This does not make the accusation less threatening; when only implied, it is much harder to answer.) Seeing Marmeladov beaten by his wife, Raskolnikov must have imagined himself—and to some extent wished himself—beaten by his mother. Yet this letter from the mother makes plain a stronger and even more frightening resemblance of the mother, Pulcheria Alexandrovna, to the landlady, Pashenka, and so finally to the pawnbroker, Alyona Ivanovna. For if Raskolnikov has intentionally picked Alyona Ivanovna to stand in the image of Pashenka, he has picked both to stand in the image of his mother. They form a triumvirate of older women, each accompanied by a younger woman, each a widow. From each Raskolnikov has asked and received something; to each he is indebted. They hold his spirit as a pledge. They seem to him tormentors, since it is on their account that he torments himself. When Raskolnikov strikes down the pawnbroker with an axe, he will strike at Pashenka; but he will also strike behind her at the image of his greatest creditor, his mother. Good reason then that, later in the book, when he is ready

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to face the police and confess to murdering the pawnbroker, meeting instead his mother, still alive and ready to accuse him not only for his past failures, but for this new stroke against her as well, he will fall in a dead faint. Good reason, too, that when he recovers and she offers to sit up beside him that night, he cries, "Don't torture me!"

Thus, his mother's letter brings Raskolnikov to a very low point—very near the murder. Yet, several torments remain before he will be ready for that. Those torments are provided in Chapter 4. All of Raskolnikov's actions in this chapter seem quite trivial in themselves, but by now very small things can tip the scale. By the end of this chapter he will be ready to turn his back on sanity and kindliness.

The first of his added torments, as he wanders through the streets talking to himself, are self-torments. True, he does seem to feel, as I have already noted, that the proposed marriage is a sort of plot against him. He is in a surprising rage against his mother:

> Oh, the cunning woman . . . Is it possible that her conscience is secretly pricking her for agreeing to sacrifice her daughter to her son? Are they blind both of them, or don't they notice anything on purpose? . . . Well, of course mother can't help being the person she is, but Dunya . . .

Again, he has already made a comment on Dunya—

> No, dear Dunya . . . the ascent to Golgotha is certaintly not so easy. No.

which tacitly compares her with Marmeladov and his ludicrous desire to be crucified. No doubt he is enraged by the accusations buried in the letter, yet his anger must rise also from a suspicion that they have intentionally planned a bad match so that he will be responsible for it, or else (as I think more probably) so as to prove to him conclusively what wretchedness he has forced upon them, thus forcing him to save them. If correct, this would indicate a certain familial resemblance between the techniques of the mother and those of the son.

Yet, even if I am right in thinking Raskolnikov has such suspicions, they are surely not conscious. His principal conscious feelings are quite opposite: rage against himself and, as I have noted, self-torment which is, if anything, only aggravated by his rage against his mother:

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> he kept torturing himself, tormenting himself with these questions, and he seemed even to derive some pleasure from it. Still, all these questions were not new, nor did they . . . occur to him just at that moment; they were old, old questions, questions that had long worried him.

In exactly the same way that being beaten by his wife had two opposed purposes for Marmeladov, Raskolnikov's worrying has two opposed purposes. First, it is a self-punishment for the debts he has already collected by inaction. At the same time, it further prevents him from taking any action; it is as much a technique of "stalling" as is his day-dreaming. Clearly, it is collecting new guilt even faster than it can pay off the old; he must give it over:

> It was clear that he ought not now to brood or to suffer passively, to waste his time in idle thoughts about how impossible it was to solve those questions, but that he had to do something at once and quickly, too. He had to make up his mind at all costs, do something, anything, or—"Or renounce life altogether!"

"To suffer passively"—that is the crucial accusation.[10] He must no longer withdraw to his room to lie about day-dreaming of riches on one hand, or of revenge on the other. He must no longer rationalize, no longer worry. The background material which the letter has filled in, the implied comparison to the passive masochist Marmeladov, the accusations of Nastasya, the whole tenor of his mother's letter, her coming visit to St. Petersburg, the impending marriage,—all lay upon Raskolnikov a demand for some immediate action.

He has reached, already, one crucial decision:

> While I'm alive this marriage will not take place, and to hell with Mr. Luzhin . . . I don't want your sacrifice Dunya! . . . mother! It shall not be, as long as I live.

He will not permit them to aggravate his debt to them. But this only leads him to a greater dilemma:

> He suddenly recollected himself and stopped. . . . It shall not be? And what can you do to prevent it? Will you forbid it? What right have you to do that? What can you promise them in return, to lay claim to such a right? To devote all your future, all your life to them *after* you have finished your course at the university and got yourself a job? We've heard that before, old chap! Those are only words. But

[10] The ensuing interpretation owes much to discussions with Robert Hellman of C.C.N.Y. and to certain essays of Edmund Bergler. Throughout the essay I am indebted to George P. Elliott of Barnard College.

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> what now? You simply have to do something now, do you understand that? And what are you doing now? You're robbing them. . . . How are you going to protect them from the Svidrigaylovs or from Vakrushin, you future millionaire . . .

Once again, he feels unable. It seems absurd to give lessons to children, work at odd jobs, or do translations as does Razumikhin;[11] that would not begin to cover the debt he feels. But if he rejects these ordinary accomplishments, then the demand for decisive action, and for extraordinary achievement, is only the greater. He must "get rich all at once." Besides, his refusal to work at some such ordinary job makes his actual need for money (as opposed to his feeling of need for action) more severe. He dare not sit out the game any longer; yet he dare not play, either, for he has made the stakes too high to dare any loss.

He has, moreover, lost confidence in himself. Because of his past failures, he now feels not only unable to solve his personal problems, but unworthy to perform any good act. "What right have you to do that?" he asks himself. The same phrase, and paraphrases of it, will turn up repeatedly. It holds his deepest sense of degradation. All "good" acts are being removed from him; he has no "right" to perform one. Yet if he cannot find one, he must

> "renounce life altogether!" he suddenly cried . . .

Immediately upon the heels of that thought comes the recollection of the man who *has* renounced life altogether, who seeks his own destruction:

> "Do you realize, . . . sir, what it means when you have nowhere to go to?" he suddenly recalled the question Marmeladov had asked him the night before.

This comparison of himself to Marmeladov is so anguishing that his mind must blot it out, must replace it with something at least less painful. That less painful thought is the murder:

> Suddenly he gave a start; a thought flashed through his mind, a thought that had also occurred to him the day before . . . he knew, he *felt* that it would most certainly cross his mind and was already waiting for it . . . it was only a dream, but in a sort of new, terrifying and completely unfamiliar guise, and he himself suddenly realized it. The blood rushed to his head and everything went black before his eyes.

[11] This becomes explicit only at the beginning of the next chapter, Chapter 5.

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Raskolnikov replaces the image of himself as Marmeladov, then, with the image of himself as murderer; and finds a relief in that; if he cannot see himself as good, then he must either see himself as nothing ("renounce life altogether") or else see himself as evil. The latter, of course, is less agonizing. He nearly faints trying to escape the mere thought of the murder; yet, the more horrible that thought, the better; for his mind must use this violence both to discharge his accumulated rage and to refute its own cruellest accusation of Marmeladov-like passivity and nothingness.

Yet he has one chance to rescue himself. He is on the Horse Guards' Boulevard, giddy with horror; as he tries to clear his vision and stagger toward a seat, he becomes involved in an episode with a drunken teen-aged girl. This episode—which at first seems out of place as well as puzzling in itself—is of very highest importance. It is Raskolnikov's last opportunity to save his self-respect. When it fails, he will feel that he has no choice but to seek an active evil. First, his refusal to help this girl has a passive destructiveness which does much to explain his past actions, and explain them in a way which is anything but flattering to him; second, it is a step in the direction of an active destructiveness. For the first time, his feelings of helplessness, self-hatred, his urge to punish himself will turn toward an open and avowed viciousness directed outward.

This scene on the boulevard is one of a closely related series running through the novel, which involve either Raskolnikov or Svidrigaylov (in many ways, Raskolnikov's *alter ego*) with younger girls, especially girls who have some air of sexual degradation. These scenes are specially significant as indexes to Raskolnikov's or Svidrigaylov's current view of the world and especially in presenting and investigating that ambiguous attitude to degradation which I have already noted. Many of these scenes will spring into the reader's mind with ease: Raskolnikov with Sonia; Svidrigaylov with Katya, with his fiancee, with Dunya. There are two scenes, however, so closely related to this one, that I would like to interrupt the natural flow of the narrative sequence for a moment to discuss them before returning to the scene on the boulevard.

I want first to draw the reader's attention to that scene near the end of the book when Svidrigaylov, having finally given up Dunya, is sleeping drunkenly in a little attic room, very much like Raskolnikov's attic. There, he suffers three evil and tormented dreams,

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each more terrifying and archetypal than the one before. The first is a disgusting dream of a mouse which runs about over his body beneath his clothes and which he cannot catch. The second is of the coffined body of a young girl whom he must have sexually assaulted in earlier life, so causing her to commit suicide. The third dream (after he *thinks* he has wakened) is a scene markedly analogous to Raskolnikov's discovery of the girl on the boulevard —Svidrigaylov finds a five year old girl who has been beaten and has fallen asleep on the stairs. Picking her up, he takes her to his room and tenderly puts her to bed. Seeing the feverish flush of her face, he thinks she is drunk, but suddenly decides instead, "It was lust, it was the face of a whore, the shameless face of a French whore." We had not imagined that the old roue, Svidrigaylov, so detested lust, that his libertinism (as revealed in the second dream) rises so directly from his Puritanism, his accusation of the world as evil (as revealed in the final dream). The order of his dreams strongly suggests that Svidrigaylov's own evil is produced directly by his vision of the world as evil. (Similarly, Raskolnikov will kill when he decides the world is too evil to be coped with except by evil.) As he tries to strike the little girl, Svidrigaylov *does* wake, horror-stricken, then goes out at once and shoots himself.

Against this series of nightmares, I want to contrast that scene, much earlier in the novel, where Raskolnikov, after the murder and his subsequent illness, goes into the streets looking for company. There he makes his first steps toward redemption. First, he gives some money to a fifteen year old street-singer. This is the first of his two "successful" attempts to be charitable; the second happens only when he is on the way to the police station to confess at the end of the novel. (Throughout Part I, Raskolnikov is unable to perform a "successful" charity; he must first have reached some sort of peace with himself and so with the people around him.) Having given the money to the street-singer, he tries to start conversations with passersby, then goes to a tavern, looks at a young prostitute named Duklida and says, "What a pretty face." When he gives her some money, he hears her shamed for begging by an older prostitute with a "bruised face and swollen upper lip." He moves at once to his first affirmation: "Live under any circumstances— only to live!"

Let me return, then, to the scene on the Horse Guards' Boulevard. Svidrigaylov is specially pertinent here, since at this very

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moment Raskolnikov is reacting to his first knowledge of him: in her letter, his mother had mentioned him as Dunya's persecutor. He has already asked himself, "How are you going to protect them from the Svidrigaylovs . . . you future millionaire. . . ." Now he introduces the name, himself, into the scene: when he first sees the fat dandy approaching the drunken teenager, who has apparently been raped already and then turned loose on the streets, Raskolnikov rushes at him calling, "Hey you! Svidrigaylov! What do you want here?" He obviously identifies the girl, whom he wants to help, with Dunya. Moreover, he *is* able to help her, at least with the aid of the elderly policeman who shortly arrives. Raskolnikov gives the policeman twenty copecks, telling him to get a cab and take the girl home. Suddenly, however, as the policeman is about to do this, Raskolnikov makes a shocking about-face:

> in an instant he became quite a different man. "I say! Hey, there!" he shouted after the policeman . . . "Leave them alone! It's not your business! Let them be! Let him . . . have his fun!"

Once again, he feels:

> Who am I to help her? Have I any right to help anyone? Let them devour each other alive for all I care. What business is it of mine? And what right had I to give away the twenty copecks? They weren't mine, were they?

On the verge of absurdity, he complains that the policeman "walked off with my twenty copecks." From this, he goes on to try to justify his about-face on the "modernistic" grounds that

> It's essential . . . that such a percentage should every year go—that way—to the devil—It's essential so that the others should be kept fresh and healthy and not be interfered with.

Once again he has failed to help; he believes (at least consciously) that this is because he has no money of his own, is dependent. Yet we must not too readily accept his evaluation of the situation. Something is very odd here; after all, Raskolnikov *was* able to help this girl; may even have helped against his will.

The problem of the twenty copecks is a distraction from the real problem. After all, if Raskolnikov had wanted to help this girl, he could have done so just as well (or nearly as well) without any money at all. Besides, money is hardly the only kind of help, for this girl or anyone else. Raskolnikov himself gets his greatest help from Razumikhin, Porfiry and Sonia; not one of them offers him

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a cent. Those characters in the novel who give money to others, often injure them with it, and sometimes intentionally: Raskolnikov feels he has been injured by advances of money from his mother, his landlady, the pawnbroker; Svidrigaylov offers money to nearly everyone he meets, but no one dares accept it for fear of being in debt to him; worse, Luzhin again and again "helps" people with money by which he quite consciously intends to trap them—as I have previously noted, he openly defines this as his best strategy. The most extreme example of this sort of thing, of course, is the gift Luzhin makes to Sonia for no other purpose than to call her a thief.

The problem for Raskolnikov, though, is that a gift of money may not only fail to help the receiver, it may equally fail to help the giver. One can almost sum up this novel as a structure of financial and emotional debts which the debtors try to pay off with charities, on one hand, or self-punishments on the other. Though the charities of Raskolnikov and Svidrigaylov may not be so malevolent as those of Luzhin, yet their motives are badly mixed, and their charities show little real concern for the person supposedly helped. Has Raskolnikov, really, any care for the needs of the girl on the Boulevard? Any more than Svidrigaylov has for Dunya's? Not really. All Svidrigaylov wants of Dunya is her virtue—if she loves him, or will submit to him, or even only accept his money, that may prove once and for all that he is not evil—or so he hopes. Similarly, Raskolnikov has no interest in this teen-aged girl as an individual personality (which might be paraphrased "as a soul"); he is using her to answer the accusations of Nastasya and his mother, to raise his own self-appraisal.

This selfishness, however, is not in itself so terribly damaging. The real problem lies in a crucial displacement which prevents these charitable acts from having even the designed effect of raising the giver's view of himself. Both Raskolnikov and Svidrigaylov try to use their money in one area to solve a problem which lies in another. Svidrigaylov wants to buy off his conscience; yet even if Dunya should accept his money, his love, his bed, that could not cancel the debt he feels to his wife, to his servant John, to the young girl he must have assaulted. Similarly, Raskolnikov must know that he is demanding an unreasonable return from whatever investment he might make in this teen-aged girl. Since she is only symbolically related to Dunya and his mother, he can do nothing

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for her which will *drastically* alter his self-evaluation. Yet he needs something drastic, wants "to get rich (emotionally) all at once." So he must realize that this charity is doomed to failure and abandons it and the girl together.

Yet this does not fully account for his turning against the girl; surely not for the viciousness with which he does so. I have suggested so far that Raskolnikov has failed because of a feeling of shame and guilt, of helplessness and dependency, because of a lack of self-confidence. These are all true, yet there may also be reasons less flattering. He may have encouraged himself to fail. He identifies this drunken girl with Dunya; he wants to help both. He does not help either and claims that this is because he is not able, does not have the right. Yet in this case, that is clearly a rationalization; he has both the right and the ability. This strongly suggests that his past statements have also been rationalizations; that he could have helped Dunya or his mother if he had really wanted to. He knows that by dismissing his students and dropping out of the university, he has injured his family. I suggest that is the reason he did so; like Marmeladov, he found a way not only of "passive suffering," but of "passively injuring" his family when he has a grudge against them. (The full nature of that grudge is far from clear, although I will later hazard a guess about a part of it.) By such a method of revenge, he could not only hurt his family, but in the very same act punish himself for so doing, while gaining the secondary benefits of self-pity. This would account, also, for his terrible isolation: those energies which should have been directed outward into ordered action have been withheld and withdrawn, but then have turned against him as self-violence in punishment for his passivity.

To have helped this girl, then, would not have helped his view of himself, but worsened it. Again, his conscience has driven him the wrong way: he feels so very guilty that he must continue acting badly or else admit that he *has* been wrong. He has not the basic sense of worth which would let him admit to any particular wrong act. Not being able to admit the wrong of having injured himself and his family, he cannot now turn to help this teen-aged girl. It seems less painful to carry on the tendencies, the self-definition, already started. So he tells the policeman, "It's not your business . . ." just as he has already told himself "It's not your business" whether you pay your landlady, whether you help your family out

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of their troubles. Yet, in one sense, this episode differs from anything earlier. This is not mere passive destructiveness, as was giving up his lessons. This is not only a refusal to help, but has an element of active viciousness. Raskolnikov, trying to escape the figure of Marmeladov, driven to "do something, anything," has made a first step in the direction of that very man he detests and wishes to attack—Svidrigaylov.

He has refused, then, an act whose performance was of greatest importance to his view of himself and of his world. Svidrigaylov would give such a refusal the inverted Puritanical rationale that the girl was evil anyway, hence a proper victim; Raskolnikov gives it the "modernistic" rationale that a certain percentage must "go . . . to the devil anyway." This is only a disguised statement of his own (self-encouraged) weakness: i.e., I am helpless to prevent suffering, therefore I may as well join the persecuters, so as to have at least *some* active role, some escape from passivity, from being nothing. Later, he will expand this rationale of "scientific percentage" into the "modernist" and "scientific" justification of the murder of Alyona Ivanovna. He now claims that he has not "any right to help anyone . . . to give away twenty copecks," that he is powerless to act in the direction of good; he will shortly commit a hideous murder in a desperate hope of proving that he *has* "the right to possess power;" a power which, he thinks, can only act in the direction of evil. (He is powerless to act in the direction of good, only because to do so now would point to the evil of his past actions.) Further, just as he did with the pawnbroker, Raskolnikov has tricked the girl on the boulevard into a position where he can claim that *she* has injured *him* by taking his money. This, in some absurd way, seems to excuse his attempt to injure her. What we have, then, in the Boulevard scene, is really a second, and much more dangerous, rehearsal of the murder.

Yet this moment on the very brink of despair is relieved by a single, momentary ray of light and sanity. Raskolnikov suddenly asks himself a singularly pertinent question:

> "And where am I going to?" he thought suddenly. "Curious! I came out for something. Came out as soon as I had read the letter. Oh, yes, I was going to Vasilyevsky Island to call on Razumikhin. That's it."

If he had planned to visit Razumikhin, we had not known it; perhaps he had not known it, himself. Yet, after reading his mother's letter, he clearly *should* go to Razumikhin. Razumikhin can help

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him to repair and replace his clothing, get some lessons or translations to do; can, in general, help him to a practical approach to his difficulties.

Razumikhin's function as a contrast to (and relief from) Raskolnikov is obvious. Razumikhin has all the external problems of Raskolnikov; none of the internal ones. Like Raskolnikov, he is a student who has had to leave the University for lack of money. He, however, has responded directly to this hardship by taking whatever work he could find, then doing it happily and well until he could resume his studies. Both strong and intelligent, he has "managed to keep himself without any outside assistance whatever," so owes no one and has not complicated his problems. He never takes "any of his failures to heart" for he has never demanded more of the world than it gives and so has no desire to see himself as a martyr. Again, not demanding much from the world, he does not hear it demanding so much in return; his conscience remains free and untroubled. Simple, frank and outgoing: when angry, he knocks someone down; when chagrined, he bangs his fist into the stove; when spreeing, he is liable to fell policemen. Unlike Raskolnikov, he is "extraordinarily cheerful and communicative" and even Raskolnikov finds it "hardly possible to be on any but friendly terms with Razumikhin." Above all, he knows who he is, what he wants, what he stands for, and preserves in himself that "sense of dignity" which Raskolnikov so desperately needs.

Though Dostoievsky does not insist on this, the names of the two characters tend to define them: the name Raskolnikov refers to that which is divided, suggested both the schismatic in religion (the heretic or "Old Believer"), and also the schizoid in personality; the name Razumikhin stands for reason, reasonability, efficiency and practicality, the very qualities he both preaches and exhibits as a character. There is also some significance in the fact that Razumikhin lives on Vasilyevsky Island and that Raskolnikov finds himself headed in that direction at this moment. Vasilyevsky Island is the home of the University, the Academy of Arts and the Academy of Sciences[12]; it must have stood in the minds of most Russians as the very center of enlightenment, culture and reason. It is precisely the place, as Razumikhin is the man, to which Raskolnikov should turn in these difficulties.

[12] Cf. Jessie Coulson's Introduction to her own translation of *Crime and Punishment*, Oxford University Press, 1953.

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As Chapter 5 opens, however, we discover that Razumikhin has been introduced only to suggest what Raskolnikov is turning against. Even the thought of visiting him suggests to Raskolnikov's bitter and tormented brain, "some ominous meaning." It would mean to give up being bitter and tormented, to reverse his strategy and, to some degree, overhaul his personality. It must seem to Raskolnikov, just as it often seemed to Dostoievsky, that the very bases of his personality lay in the unreasonable and cranky; to give up those qualities might, he fears, also threaten to make him nothing. It would surely deprive him of the great triumph which he has imagined would prove once and for all his transcendent worth and repay his conscience:

> Suppose (Razumikhin) does get me some lessons, suppose he even shares his last penny with me, . . . so that I could buy myself a pair of boots and mend my clothes to be able to give lessons, what then? What shall I do with my few coppers afterwards? Is that what I want? . . . did I really think of putting everything right . . . a solution of all my difficulties in Razumikhin?

Nothing small or partial will do—Raskolnikov is nothing if not proud. He has put off his visit too long; to go now to Razumikhin would mean admitting he has been wrong, must accept other men's way out of his dilemma. He knows that eventually he *must* go to reason and to Razumikhin ("I shall call on Razumikhin, of course") . . . Yet, to save his pride, he must first "solve" his own problem his own way:

> I shall call on him . . . on the day after I've *done* it, after *that* [the murder] has been settled, and when everything is different.

This, in its way, is true enough—he *will* go to Razumikhin after the murder; further, Razumikhin (and reason) will then visit *him*. Again, after the murder everything will be different, yet Raskolnikov must suspect even now that in a more crucial sense everything will be just the same. Nonetheless, he has made his decision. He jumps up, crying, "Will it really happen?" His answer comes, very fittingly, as a nightmare.

Thus far, in the book's first four chapters, Dostioevsky has investigated his hero through a few highly significant bits of action and by means of comparisons and contrasts. At the same time, as I have already noted, he has laid the ground-work for all the remain-

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ing structure of the novel[13] by introducing all the important secondary characters, excepting only Porfiry Petrovich, the chief inspector, who obviously cannot enter the story until after the murder. We have met first, Marmeladov, the key secondary figure of Part I: he has shown to Raskolnikov his own passive masochism, a revelation which, as I have said, is crucial in driving Raskolnikov toward violence. We have also met, though at second hand, Razumikhin, who will step in after the murder and dominate Part II, bringing Raskolnikov to the very verge of confession and redemption. In the letter, we have met Raskolnikov's mother and sister, who will appear just when he is ready to confess (at the end of Part II); they, together with other "accusers"—Porfiry Petrovich and that unnamed workman who calls Raskolnikov "Murderer!" —will hurl Raskolnikov back into the terrible depths of Parts III and IV. We have been told about the book's one true saint, Sonia, and its one true villain, Luzhin—the two characters who will struggle and exert such strong and opposite attractions upon Raskolnikov through Parts IV and V. Finally, we have met Svidrigaylov, who will oppose Porfiry Petrovich as a father-figure in the struggle for Raskolnikov's soul in Part VI. Oddly enough, Svidrigaylov's influence will ultimately be for the good, showing as he so graphically does, the evil, the agony, the self-destruction which must fall on the man who tries to explain away his guilt, who will not confess. It is no accident that at the end of the novel proper, the police will hear of Svidrigaylov's death and of Raskolnikov's confession almost at the same moment.

Dostoievsky has planted the seeds, then, from which most of the novel must grow. He has made a preliminary exploration of Raskolnikov and of his torments. Now, after one brief respite, one glimpse of Razumikhin and rationality, he is ready to plunge into the depths of Raskolnikov's agonized mind, into his nightmare of himself. Turning his back on Vasilyevsky Island and on Razumikhin, Raskolnikov has fallen, characteristically, into a deep but troubled sleep. If we have had one momentary ray of light and sanity, the darkness which follows will only be the darker for that.

Raskolnikov's dream may be briefly summed up (with none of its overwhelming horror): Raskolnikov, a boy of seven, is walking with his father to the little church and cemetery where his grand-

[13] A stimulating study by Edward Wasiolek, "On the Structure of *Crime and Punishment*," appeared in the March 1959 issue of PMLA.

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mother and younger brother are buried. On the way they must pass a tavern which has an ominous atmosphere. Out of it, a group of artisans and their women swarm, climbing into a cart which belongs to one of them named Mikolka. Attached to this cart is a weak little old mare which they jeer, curse and whip, trying to force her into a gallop. When the mare can scarcely pull them, they become wild with rage, dancing about and beating her with whips and sticks. At last Mikolka, furious, kills her with an iron bar. Meantime, the young Raskolnikov runs about trying to stop them, then finally "put[s] his arms round her dead, blood-stained muzzle and kisse[s] . . . her . . . eyes . . ." Then he suddenly " rushe[s] in a rage at Mikolka with his little fists," but is caught and restrained by his father. When he tries to cry out, he wakens.

Like any other dream, this one has day remnants which offer some hints about its significance; further, these same motifs will carry on past the dream into the later development of the novel. Carts for instance, like trunks and taverns, have a considerable textural importance throughout the book. Later, for example, Raskolnikov will pass through the gates of his victim's house hiding behind one; after the murder, he will very nearly walk under the wheels of a carriage, then will be beaten by its driver who will believe (correctly, I think) that he did it on purpose; later, Marmeladov *will* fall under the carriage and find there his own death.

At the moment, however, I am much more concerned with the carts Raskolnikov has already encountered during the day—the carts from which this dream-cart must in part derive. While reading in his mother's letter that she and Dunya would be driven to the railway station in a peasant's cart, he had recalled that he himself used to drive just such a cart. Again, we have already mentioned the scene in Chapter 1 when Raskolnikov was on the way to rehearse the murder and a man had shouted at him from a huge empty cart, "Hey, you there, German hatter!" Raskolnikov had "at once stopped in his tracks and clutched nervously at his hat."

That episode first introduced the element of ridicule which was to be pointed so strongly at Marmeladov and Raskolnikov in later scenes. The tavern loungers and the neighbors who had jeered at Marmeladov, the wife who beats him, the drunkard who shouted at Raskolnikov, Nastasya with her convulsive laughter—all are transformed in the dream into the mob who swarm, jeering, from the tavern and who drive and beat the poor old horse. From this

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viewpoint, then, the horse represents both Raskolnikov and Marmeladov, being jeered, beaten and finally killed because they cannot pull the load of their families.

Raskolnikov's dream has reminded him how he, as a little boy

> always liked watching those huge dray-horses with their long manes and thick legs, walking leisurely, with measured steps, and drawing a whole mountain behind them, but without the slightest strain, as though they found it so much easier going with carts than without carts. But now, curiously enough, some peasant's small, lean, greyish-brown mare was harnessed to one of these huge carts, the sort of poor old nag which—he had seen it so often—found it very hard to draw quite an ordinary cart with wood or hay piled on top of it, especially when the cart was stuck in the mud or in a rut, and every time that happened, the peasant flogged her so brutally, sometimes even across the eyes and muzzle, and he felt so sorry, so sorry for the poor old horse that he almost burst into tears, and his mother always used to take him away from the window.

I take this to be a description, first, of the ever-capable Razumikhin (who was introduced only a short time before the dream); then, a description of Raskolnikov, the thin, little feeble mare who "doesn't earn his keep" and is most surely "stuck in the mud." In part, then, the nightmare shows Raskolnikov to himself as a man who simply cannot (or thinks he cannot) pull the vast, vulgar, sweating load laid on him and is being derided, jeered and beaten because of it. All he can do is to kick with impotent rage at his tormentors. Good reason, then, that when Raskolnikov wakes from his dream, "Every bone in his body seem[s] to ache" and "his eyes [are] burning." He wakes with the physical sensations of having actually undergone the beating he has dreamed of, and which he has been undergoing, emotionally, for many months.

Yet, the dream is not only an interpretation of the past where Raskolnikov sees himself as helpless and injured; it is also another prediction and rehearsal of the future, where he hopes to see himself filled with great and injurious power. If he recalled that he himself used to drive a peasant's cart, like the one his mother and sister will take to the station, that may suggest that he is not the horse in the dream, but the driver, Mikolka. There is much evidence to bear this out. While the peasants are beating the little mare, someone shouts to Mikolka, "Why don't you strike her with an axe? Despatch her at once!" Like the pawnbroker woman, the old mare is sickly, feeble and in some essential way inferior.

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Though outwardly respectable, she is actually parasitic and certainly "doesn't earn her keep"—in the next chapter, the young student will tell his officer friend that Alyona Ivanovna is "of no use to anyone." When he wakes from his dream, Raskolnikov himself immediately assumes that it *was* a vision of himself killing her:

> Good God! . . . is it possible that I will really take a hatchet, hit her on the head with it, crack her skull, slither about in warm, sticky blood, break the lock, steal and shake with fear, hide myself all covered in blood and with the hatchet—Good God! Is it possible?

He decides that it is not possible. Yet no one can miss the tone of delight with which he describes these horrors which he asserts that he will not commit.

We may also note here, incidentally, that the painter who falsely confesses to this murder is also named "Mikolka," though most translators, apparently wishing to avoid confusion, give his name as "Nikolay." I suggest that Dostoievsky created this complication intentionally as one hint to the meaning of the dream and its relation to the murder. In the dream, Raskolnikov, disguised as a workman named Mikolka, kills a horse symbolic of a pawnbroker woman; later a painter, also named Mikolka, (I have already pointed out that he comes from Ryazan and is a Raskolnik) confesses to Raskolnikov's actual murder of that same woman.

Yet, if Mikolka is identified with Raskolnikov, and the old horse with the pawnbroker, we must not forget that the pawnbroker is always symbolically related, for Raskolnikov, to his landlady and his mother. Thus, in the dream, Raskolnikov may be seen to be beating Pashenka, and, more important, his mother. It is she who still pulls the family load, though too old and feeble to do so. It is she who is "just breaking his heart." And it is Raskolnikov who drives her on. We should notice the great emphasis upon beating the horse across the eyes; Raskolnikov feels particularly guilty about his mother's knitting shawls and cuffs at night; he fears she may go blind before he can help her. Thus, since conscience must accuse him of driving his mother and sister, in this aspect the dream presents him to himself as fearfully and essentially evil, in the past. And this self-definition must help lead him on to become evil in the future.

Still, if we are to understand this dream, we must turn it once again and see it in yet a different light. Though in one sense Ras-

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kolnikov is the horse killed in his dream, and is in another sense the brute who kills it, he is present in a much more obvious guise —as himself when seven years old. This line of interpretation is strengthened by several phrases in the dream which echo phrases in the previous episode (the scene on the Horse Guard's Boulevard). When, in the earlier scene, he had seen the dandy approaching the teen-aged girl,

> Raskolnikov rushed at him with his fists, without stopping to consider that the thick-set gentleman was a match for two men like himself.

Similarly, in the dream, the young Raskolnikov

> rushed in a rage at Mikolka with his little fists.

In the dream, the vision of himself as dependent and helpless is even more exaggerated than in the Boulevard scene: he has now become a church-going little boy who must deal with hulking, vicious workmen. Once again, as on the Boulevard, the fact that he owns nothing is offered as proof of his helplessness: Mikolka rages, as he beats the mare, "My property . . . Mine . . . My property!" In his dream, Raskolnikov again has "no right to help." Yet this may be as much a hope and an excuse as it is a fear; having no rights, one has no responsibilities. Thus Raskolnikov need not help the mare—or the girl on the Boulevard, or Dunya, or his mother. And though in his dream he credits himself with having made an heroic attempt, he has been forcibly restrained—on the Boulevard, by the policeman; in the dream, by his father who tells him:

> "Come along . . . they're drunk. Having fun, the fools. Come along and don't look. . . . Playing the fool. It's not our business."

This is a startling echo; on the Boulevard, Raskolnikov had turned to the policeman and, at the very moment of his shocking change-of-heart, shouted almost the same words:

> "Leave them alone! It's not your business! Let them be! Let him . . . have his fun! What do you care?"

This echo, when one first recognizes it, can be very misleading. Clearly, the horse has some relation to the girl on the boulevard; one is liable to think that Raskolnikov's words about her have been echoed in the dream to show why he turned against her. One is led

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into speculations about whether or not Raskolnikov may, in his childhood, have witnessed a scene like that in the dream, and have heard his father make such a comment. This is, of course, beyond the scope of the novel; no one will ever know. Besides, it is of no importance, since even if such an event *had* occurred, that would neither excuse nor explain Raskolnikov's actions on the Boulevard. To put his own words from that earlier scene into his father's mouth in the dream is, at best, only a rationalization, an attempt to give his father's authority to the idea that he had "no right" to help, or else an attempt to blame his own viciousness upon a supposed callousness in his father.

The deeper purpose of this echo is less simple and less flattering. Twice—once on the Boulevard, once in the dream—Raskolnikov has refused help to someone and claimed it was not his business. Both claims are, themselves, echoes of his earlier statement about his own intimate affairs, his "business"—his rent, his debts, his clothing. He has claimed that they, too—those "matters that required his most immediate attention, . . . did not concern him at all." And here again, as in the dream or on the Boulevard, the reason "he did not want to bother" about his own business, is that this is the best way he can refuse help to others. Thus, these echoes lead us back, once again, to Raskolnikov's relation with his family. This explains why Raskolnikov is restrained from going to the aid of the horse in the dream—it partly represents his mother and sister, and he wishes them to be injured. This is the same factor which restrains the horse, insofar as it represents Raskolnikov himself, and makes him too weak and feeble to pull his cart—and then makes him so furious with himself for having injured others and himself, that he feels like thrashing himself to death.

It is very suggestive that Raskolnikov picks this particular phrase —that his affairs are none of his business—to explain his method of revenge. It makes possible a guess about the nature of the grudge he wants to pay off against his mother—or, since that grudge must be very old and complicated and must involve much blame on both sides, a guess at the particular events which have triggered this particular set of weapons in Raskolnikov and this particular excuse for their use.

The only hint we have of any specific grudge, lies in the matter of the landlady's invalid daughter, Natalya Zarnitsyn, now dead, with whom Raskolnikov had been in love and whom he had con-

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tracted to marry. We do not learn about this affair until after the murder when Raskolnikov is called in to the police station because of his debt to Pashenka.[14] Later on, we learn that Raskolnikov's mother had apparently raised strong objections, and from her self-pitying account of the affair to Razumikhin, we may judge what tack she took with Raskolnikov:

> "I could never rely on his character, not even when he was a boy of fifteen. . . . Why, to take something that happened only recently. I wonder if you know that only a year and a half ago he took it into his head to marry that girl—what was her name?—the daughter of Mrs. Zarnitsyn, his landlady—oh, it was an awful shock to me! . . . Do you think . . . my tears, my appeals, my illness or perhaps even my death from grief, or our poverty would have stopped him? He would have calmly stepped over all the obstacles. But surely, surely, he does care for us a little, doesn't he?"[15]

The marriage did not take place, apparently because of Natalya's death, and it is not possible to tell how much the mother's interference may have complicated matters. She plainly has acted very possessive and blameful and now feels anything but charitable:

> "May God forgive me . . . but I couldn't help being glad when I heard of her death, though I don't know which of them would have ruined which . . ."

Raskolnikov feels the loss of Natalya more strongly than he likes to admit. It would not be surprising if he blamed his mother for her death—perhaps quite unreasonably. He certainly does blame her for the loss of the love affair, does resent her possessive interference, and the kind of technique she has used against him. Watching the first awakenings of love between Dunya and Razumikhin, he suddenly breaks in, full of nostalgia and, though he tries to deny it, resentment:

> ". . . do you remember, mother, that I was in love and wanted to get married. . . . I really don't know why I was so attached to her at the time. Because she was always ill, I suppose. If she'd been lame or a hunchback I believe I'd have loved her better still." He smiled wistfully. "Yes,—a sort of spring madness."
>
> "No, it wasn't only spring madness," Dunya said, warmly.
>
> . . . Then, completely absorbed in his thoughts, he got up, went up to his mother, kissed her, went back to his seat and sat down.
>
> "You're still in love with her," said Mrs. Raskolnikov, touched.

[14] Part II, Ch. 1.
[15] Part III, Ch. 2.

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> "Her? Now? Oh, I see, you mean her? No. It's as if it never happened in this world at all. . . . And everything here seems to be happening quite in another world. . . . You, too, seem to be miles away."[16]

I am certainly not suggesting that Raskolnikov would have been happy with Natalya; there is every reason to think their marriage would have been just about like the Marmeladovs'. I am only pointing out that he must feel deprived of the management of his most intimate affairs, feel that his mother has made his life into her business, not his own. He, in revenge, has learned to frustrate her plans by refusing to "concern himself" with his own affairs. This also would account for the childish possessiveness of Mikolka in the dream. Raskolnikov has permitted the control of his life to pass out of his hands; recalling the incident of Natalya, he even gets up like a dutiful little boy, walks over and kisses his mother, then returns and sits down as if in a trance. Yet, however withdrawn he becomes, some part of his mind must be frantic with rage, must want to club someone or something to death, must want to shout that his affairs are:

> My property . . . Mine . . . My Property!

Thus, in the dream, he beats his mother to death, mocking her all the while with her own possessiveness.

Further, Raskolnikov seems to have taken a similarly ironical method of revenge in using his mother's accusations: resenting her blamefulness, he sees to it that her worst reproaches come true. He has picked up her phrase that "he would have calmly stepped over all the obstacles" and has apparently decided to "show her;" his theory for the murder is built upon a claim that the superior man (himself) is permitted everything, has a right to "step over certain obstacles," is even entitled "to step over a corpse or wade through blood, . . . to eliminate all obstacles"[17] if his conscience leads him to do so. Again, thinking back upon the murder, Raskolnikov reflects that "I was in a great hurry to step over . . . but I did not step over—I remained on this side."[18] We should also recall that Raskolnikov always acts worse under the influence of those who accuse him—his mother and sister, the workman who calls him "Murderer," the Porfiry who torments him, Svidrigaylov

[16] Part III, Ch. 3.
[17] Part III, Ch. 5.
[18] Part III, Ch. 6.

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who insists on seeing a likeness between them. He can only confess to, and be saved by, those who respect him regardless of whatever evil he may have committed—Sonia, Polya Marmeladov, the changed Porfiry. Not the least profound insight in this novel lies in the way its hero always tends to *become* what people tell him that he already *is*.

But I have gone far from the dream; let me return to it. I am faced, now, with the problem of resolving these seemingly disparate readings of the dream. First of all, where is Raskolnikov in his dream? Is he the horse, the little boy, the father, or the brute Mikolka? The answer must be Yes. All of the characters of the dream are the dreamer. The problem is not to decide who is who, but rather to understand the tenor of the dreamer's apprehension of the world, that is, of his mind.

That is not so difficult as it might seem. The dream shows Raskolnikov to himself as a man too feeble in drawing his burdens, yet entirely too strong in punishing himself for that failure. Thus he is stuck on a treadmill of guilt and rage where he is beating himself to death for being stuck. At the same time, the dream shows him a world which has the same characteristics: all good characters are weak or victimized. (The dream contains but disguises the fact that these characters have chosen to be either weak or victimized.) Meantime, "the worst are full of passionate intensity." The only active role in the dream belongs to such destroyers as Mikolka. Raskolnikov's dream tells him that he must choose either murder or suicide; either kill or be killed.

For the horse, also, I have given what must seem disparate interpretations. Does the horse represent the teen-aged girl, Dunya and Sonia, Or does it represent the pawnbroker, the landlady and the mother, Or Marmeladov and Raskolnikov? Once again, the answer to all the questions is Yes. To miss the identity of all these characters as symbolized by the horse is to miss an essential texture of Raskolnikov's mind. In particular, we must recognize the identity of Raskolnikov with the pawnbroker he kills. I have already pointed out that he has picked Alyona Ivanovna as exemplifying the worst qualities of his mother—debt collecting and tyranny. Again, I have shown that Raskolnikov shares many of those worst qualities (no doubt his mother was an effective teacher)—especially the technique of intentional mismanagement so as to blame others and collect debts against them. These are the very

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qualities he wants to punish in himself and so to annihilate. Thus, he has chosen Alyona Ivanovna to stand not only as a scapegoat for his mother, but much more important, for himself. Though outwardly respectable because she earns a living, she is at least as much a parasite as he is. In Chapter 3, Nastasya had said that he was "of no use to himself or anyone else." In Chapter 5 which follows, the young student will tell his officer friend that the pawnbroker is "no use to anyone," and Raskolnikov will recognize this as a reflection of his own thoughts. In a world, then, where he sees no alternatives but murder or suicide, Raskolnikov has carefully picked out Alyona Ivanovna to take the punishment he feels he should level at himself. I return to my initial quotation from *Gravity and Grace* by Simone Weil:

> A hurtful act is the transference to others of the degradation which we bear in ourselves. That is why we are inclined to commit such acts as a way of deliverance.

The fact that Raskolnikov wakes with the assumption that the dream meant murder:

> Good God! . . . is it possible that I will really take a hatchet, hit her on the head. . . .

instead of the only other alternative, suicide, indicates what choice he has made.

In the bases of his mind, then, he has reached the first of his two great decisions—that he will kill Alyona Ivanovna. Though he believes that he has decided otherwise, he is wrong. He is, in fact, unable to reach *any* decision with his conscious mind, for the unconscious areas have taken over in a desperate, though obviously foolish, attempt to prove himself worthy of life. From this point, he is less and less able to control his actions, less and less able to understand them. He cannot imagine why he goes home so indirectly, by way of a detour through the Hay Market where he encounters Lisaveta, or why

> such a decisive, and, at the same time, such an entirely accidental meeting in the Hay Market (where he had no business to be at all) occurred just at that hour and even at that minute of his life. . . . It was as though it had happened on purpose, as though the meeting had been specially arranged for him!

It was. The meeting may be "entirely accidental" so far as Lisaveta's part in it is concerned. He, however, has deliberately placed

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himself where he could run into her. It is luck that he happens to find her today; but if not today, then sooner or later.

Having "accidentally" encountered Lisaveta, and "accidentally" found out that she will be away—and her sister home alone—the next evening at seven, Raskolnikov returned to his house and "entered his room like a man sentenced to death." For good reason; we have already seen how closely he identifies with his chosen victim.

> He thought of nothing, and indeed he was quite incapable of thinking; but he suddenly felt with all his being that he no longer possessed any freedom of reasoning or of will, and that everything was suddenly and irrevocably settled.

From this point on, he acts under compulsion, like a man being led or pushed, for his conscious mind is no longer in control; it has yielded to unconscious forces it does not recognize. Thus we reach a great irony; in the murder, the very act meant to prove conclusively to himself that he is an active person, he feels entirely passive, entirely as if compelled by forces outside himself. The only act which, at this point, could have felt "active" should be some practical and direct action aimed at taking command of his problems. The murder itself is, in the long run, an act of the deepest passivity.

Even though the unconscious mind has gained control, the conscious mind must still be reckoned with, must be convinced that the murder is a proper act. Chapter 6, which is concerned with preparations for the murder, demonstrates the workings of this most important of preparations. At the same time, however, the nature of Raskolnikov's preparations permits Dostoievsky to investigate the motive which still underlies those motives we have so far discussed. Here, by revealing Raskolnikov's desire to make his preparations badly and get caught, his determination to blunder, Dostoievsky can lay the groundwork for Raskolnikov's second great decision—the decision to confess.

If the conscious mind is to be assuaged, that can only be done by bringing the murder under some noble-sounding rationalization. The outlines of this rationalization are sketched in by a very cleverly contrived flashback to a scene where Raskolnikov had heard "a student he knew called Pokorev" telling an Army officer that one might kill Alyona Ivanovna as an humanitarian project. He argues that he could:

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> "gladly murder that damned old woman and rob her of all she has . . . kill her, take her mony, and with its help devote (himself) to the service of humanity and the good of all. Well, don't you think that one little crime could be expiated and wiped out by thousands of good deeds? . . . One death in exchange for a hundred lives—why it's a simple sum in arithmetic!"

When reminded that this is a matter of "human nature," not of arithmetic, he replies:

> "even human nature can be improved and set on the right path, for otherwise we should all drown in a sea of prejudices. Otherwise there wouldn't have been a single great man."

Raskolnikov, too, is a student, and recognizes in Pokorev his own thoughts. We meet this rationalization in its fuller form much later in the book, when Porfiry produces Raskolnikov's essay, *On Crime*. This essay recounts Pokorev's ideas of the humanitarian criminal, but greatly expands the idea, only suggested by Pokorev, of the superman. Raskolnikov argues in his article that men fall into two types: the great stupid, sluggish mass of mankind who must obey and be led; second, the "great" men, the leaders who try to improve mankind's lot, or at least do *something* with it. They, the supermen, show themselves by their ability to step across any lines of already existing authority. They are feared and mistrusted by the masses and are often considered criminals and may be killed because if it. The superman must expect this and must yet dare, for if successful, he will become an object of veneration, himself.

Though on first reading the novel, one is surprised by this essay which seems to introduce a completely new motive for the murder, one should quickly recognize that it is really only the old motive obviously inverted. Raskolnikov suspects that he is a sub-man, unworthy of the notice of anyone, so invents a theory to prove himself superior to all, above all authority; he suspects himself of being completely incapable of action, so invents a theory to prove himself capable of the grandest and most far-reaching actions; he suspects himself of being a parasite upon his mother and sister, so invents a theory to prove himself a benefactor to all mankind.

Thus, if I may for a moment jump ahead to the end of this chapter where Raskolnikov will have completed his preparations, we will see there the grotesque spectacle—by no means so uncommon as one could wish—of a man walking through the public streets on his way to commit a savage and hideous murder, but

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speculating, as he goes, about what improvements he might make in the public gardens when he comes into power:

> Walking past Yussupov Park, he became entirely absorbed in the question of improving its amenities by high-playing fountains, and he could not help thinking that they would improve the air in all the squares marvellously. Gradually he came to the conclusion that if the Summer Gardens were extended to Mars Square and even joined on the Mikhailovsky Palace Gardens, it would be a most wonderful improvement for the town.

I cannot imagine that most political revolutionaries felt much differently when young. Neither am I sure that Raskolnikov would be so much worse than most governors and statesmen; he might very well make just such improvements as he envisages, and seems more likely to dedicate himself to the welfare of humanity than most politicians one can recall—revolutionary or conservative. His only serious miscalculation about men who overstep authority is his failure to recognize his own motive in so doing. Yet, he continually hovers about it. First, he recognizes that people, in general, may prefer less pleasant parts of the city:

> Why was it, he wondered, that in all the large cities people seemed inclined to congregate, not by any means out of sheer necessity, just in those parts where there were neither gardens nor fountains, but dirt, bad smells, and every kind of abomination?

Next, he asks why he himself prefers degradation:

> He then remembered his own walks in the Hay Market, and for a moment he seemed to wake up. "What silly nonsense!" he thought. "No, much better not to think of anything at all."

Better not indeed; he might recognize his own urge which is carrying him at this moment, not toward power and aggrandisement, but toward degradation and abasement.

This problem opens the motive that yet underlies those we have already discussed; it forces me to return to the body of the chapter and to investigate the other preparations Raskolnikov has made for the murder. For, once his unconscious has convinced his conscious mind that murder is permissible, even noble, the conscious mind must then set about making the necessary physical preparations. Yet, even as it does, it realizes that its chief problem will be to protect itself against the deeper motives of the unconscious mind—its desire that Raskolnikov should be caught:

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> he had been greatly interested in the question why almost every crime was so easily solved . . . the main reason for it lay not so much in the physical impossibility of concealing a crime as in the criminal himself; the criminal himself, at least almost every criminal, is subject at the moment of the crime to a kind of break-down of his reasoning faculties and of his will-power, which are replaced by an amazingly childish carelessness just at the moment when he is most in need of caution and reason.

This pushes our analysis of motive an important step onward. Raskolnikov knows, even before he commits the crime, that his greatest enemy will be his own mind, that once again he will defeat himself. He knows, then, at some level of his mind, that he will be trying to get caught, that there is a purpose to his "childish carelessness." The only plausible purpose is a desire for punishment. Thus, before he ever commits the crime, he knows that he belongs, and wishes to belong, not to the class of "great men" who may overstep, but to the class of "ordinary" people who, should they ever mistake themselves for advanced people or "destroyers" and get out of hand,

> "you won't even have to employ anyone to thrash them—for, being extremely law-abiding by nature, they will thrash themselves: some of them will perform this service for one another, while others will administer the thrashing to themselves with their own hands. In addition, they impose all sorts of public penances upon themselves, and the result is both beautiful and edifying. In short, you needn't worry. It's a law of nature."[19]

It may well be asked what Raskolnikov hopes to gain from so severe a punishment as that he seeks. The answer, I think, may be divided into four parts. First, he needs to feel adequately punished for his past wrongs, cleared of the deep sense of shame which has dogged him throughout Part I. This sense of shame is so severe that, as René Fuelop-Miller rightly observes, Raskolnikov has a nightmare in the Epilogue where he sees his own degradation as a great plague that spreads over and infects the whole European continent. He must somehow cleanse his view of himself and of his world. He later admits that he already knew that the sacrifice of Alyona Ivanovna, which was supposed to accomplish this, would fail:

[19] Part III, Ch. 5.

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> finally, I am a louse, . . . because I myself am perhaps worse and nastier than the louse I killed, and I knew *beforehand* that I would say that to myself *after* killing her![20]

Yet, knowing this, he went on with the murder, for it was not really the murder, but its consequences which held out hope to him.

Second, he must want punishment as a proof that he is not negligible. In this sense, Raskolnikov is like a child who would rather be whipped than ignored. He needs proof that he *is* a person, and is capable of some act vicious enough to compel some kind of attention from those in authority. In *The Need for Roots,* Simone Weil has written:

> Just as the only way of showing respect for somebody suffering from hunger is to give him something to eat, so the only way of showing respect for somebody who has placed himself outside the law is to reinstate him inside the law by subjecting him to the punishment ordained by the law.

And, in *The House of the Dead,* Dostoievsky himself has written of the convicts in the prison at Omsk:

> This general tone was apparent externally in a certain peculiar personal dignity of which almost every inmate of the prison was acutely conscious. It was as though the status of a convict, of a condemned prisoner, was a sort of rank, and an honourable one, too.

Punishment may be one form of respect, then; at best, it may show the criminal that those in authority still hold some hope for him, believe he may yet be corrected; at worst, it shows the criminal that he is enough of a person to have some effect, if only in angering those in authority.

Third, and as an extension of this, Raskolnikov must want a punishment which will force him to act hereafter in line with his own conscience. In a sense, his problem is to accept his mother's morality, while giving up her conflicting technique. His conscience's accusations, unsupported by an external force, are driving him to act always worse and worse. Thus, he must find an authority so overwhelming, even vicious, that he will have to knuckle under to it and stop, once and for all, his painful rebellion. Simone Weil, again, has written in *Gravity and Grace:*

[20] Part III, Ch. 6.

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> The powerful, if they carry oppression beyond a certain point, necessarily end by making themselves *adored* by their slaves. For the thought of being under absolute compulsion, the plaything of another, is unendurable for a human being. Hence, if every way of escape from this constraint is taken from him, there is nothing left for him to do but to persuade himself that he does the things he is forced to do willingly, that is to say, to substitute *devotion* for *obedience.*

It is just such a devotion, such an obedience, that he desires; none other will assure him of being as good as he demands of himself. Thus, no leniency on the part of the state is tolerable to him. When, during his last interview with Porfiry Petrovich, Porfiry offers him a lighter sentence if he will confess, Raskolnikov at once admits that he does not want any reduction of sentence; Porfiry admits that he had suspected as much all along.[21]

Finally, and most important, Raskolnikov wants not only to be forced into being a worthy citizen, but most especially he wants to be defined as a loved and worthy child in a God-centered, family-style universe. That universe must be founded upon moral law, and that moral law enforced by the fatherly punishing arm of the state. Raskolnikov is exactly like the child who deliberately disobeys to find out if the rules really exist, if behavior has limits, if his family lives inside solid walls. It is no use to ignore such disobedience, the child will only force attention, make his defiance conspicuous. And he will not be happy until he has received the punishment, the assurance, that he wants. This explains Porfiry's emphasis, in the later chapters, on the idea of definition:

> "You see, if, for instance, I were to put my suspect under lock and key a little too soon, I may, as it were, lend him some moral support. . . . I'd give him, as it were, a definite status, I'd, as it were, satisfy him psychologically and set his mind at rest, so that he'd slip through my fingers and retire into his shell."[21]

Raskolnikov is like the ex-convict Kuzma, in Chekhov's story "An Encounter" who, if not punished and reviled for his misdeeds, is faced by the awful prospect of an empty universe where "anything is possible" and where no god-father enforces justice or order upon mankind. So it is that Dostoievsky, in *The Diary of a Writer,* warns the new jurors about their leniency:

> by prison and penal servitude, perhaps, you would have saved half of them. You would have assuaged, and not burdened, them. Self-

[21] Part IV, Ch. 5.

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> purification through suffering is easier, I tell you. . . . You are merely planting cynicism in their souls. . . . You infuse into their souls incredulity in the popular truth, in the truth of God; you are leaving them confused. . . .

It may seem strange that Dostoievsky, who had himself been a convict, should urge jurors to send more people to prison. This will not seem so strange if one recalls the paradoxical development of Dostoievsky's political and religious thought. Much of the analysis of this novel bears at least a tangential applicability to its author's life. It is well known that nearly all his adult life he was given to compulsive gambling and mismanagement of his affairs and this has often been interpreted as a form of onanism and self-punishment. It is well known, too, that much of the guilt he felt emanated from the time that his tyrannical father was killed by rebelling serfs—a time which coincided with the period that Dostoievsky was, himself, feeling most rebellious.[22] Finally, nearly everyone knows how Dostoievsky was later arrested among a group of liberal thinkers and somewhat revolutionary literati, sentenced to death, led to the scaffold with a group of other "condemned" men—all of whom had already been pardoned—then, at the last minute, "saved" and his sentence commuted to four years hard labour in Siberia and four more years as a common soldier. Anyone would expect that the exaggerated severity of this sentence and the deliberate cruelty of the mock execution (one of the prisoners never fully regained sanity)—that all this would set Dostoievsky once and for all against the established Czarist regime. Quite the opposite happened. From the moment of his imprisonment, Dostoievsky began moving, year by year, toward an ever more conservative political position, an ever more servile attitude toward the Little Father, the Czar. At the same time, he became more and more an orthodox Christian and more convinced of the mission of the Czarist state as the bearer of true Christianity to the world. He himself claimed in a letter to Dr. Yanovsky that his period in Siberia had cured him of a mental derangement. I would recommend to the reader, once again, that passage just quoted from Simone Weil, which began, "The powerful, if they carry oppression beyond a certain point, necessarily end by making themselves *adored*. . . ." Or one might compare that superb scene in *Great Expectations* where the vicious and tyrannical Mrs. Joe,

[22] Cf. e.g., Freud, *Dostoevsky and Parricide*.

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after long suspense, finally confronts old Orlick who had struck her down and half killed her with his blacksmith's hammer. She politely requests him to sit down and take tea with her.

Thus it is that, to Dostoievsky, those characters who are sick or handicapped—the invalid Natalya, the near-idiot Lisaveta, the crippled and stuttering Kapernaumovs—seem to be specially godly and blessed. The crushing hand of god has already been laid upon them; they have received His attention, "accepted suffering" (which is synonymous, here, with punishment) in advance, and so are blessed.

This also explains how Dostoievsky can feel that the criminal may be the most earnest God-seeker; the naughty child may be the most earnest parent-seeker. Notice that in Raskolnikov's awful nightmare, the murder symbolized there is only an interruption of his journey toward the church. In another sense, it is another way of making a part of that journey. Several times in the novel, Raskolnikov vigorously asserts that he does believe in God; his crime is one way of provoking God to declare himself. Again, notice that Raskolnikov is a law student. He has chosen a very dear school—the experience of punishment and law. Though there *are* many other schools of universal moral law, none are too convincing. What Raskolnikov most anxiously wants to learn is that "you can't get away with it"—whatever it is. He gets the answer he wants; it does seem a shame, however, that he has to do so much of the work involved in seeing that the answer comes out right.

And how very hard he *does* work, trying to get caught. He begins by taking his usual method of sabotaging his own plans—daydreaming; he lies half-asleep in his room fantasying about oases in the desert and sands of gold, until it is well past six o'clock, so that he is rushed in his preparations and late in arriving. This late arrival, and the resulting late departure, leads directly to the murder of Lisaveta. Then again, he has made no *real* preparations for the murder at all. He has counted the number of steps to Alyona Ivanovna's house, has invented a sling to carry the axe under his coat, has prepared a needle and thread; yet he has taken no care to see that he could find an axe, nor, what is worse, that he could return it after the murder without being seen. Neither has he made any plans for getting out of his own house, or into Alyona Ivanovna's, without being seen. Hardly conducive to the "perfect

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crime." Then again, as he walks through the street, glancing at no one and trying to

> make himself as inconspicuous as possible . . . he remembered his hat. "Good God! and I had the money the day before yesterday and I didn't think of getting a cap!" He swore loudly.

We should not forget (even if he does) that he *did* think of getting a cap; it was the first thing he thought of as soon as the drunkard in the cart called him a "German hatter."

It is true that Raskolnikov has found an axe, that he does get into Alyona Ivanovna's house unnoticed, screened by a passing cart, he does get up the stairs without meeting anyone, but this is all a matter of chance. Unfortunately for him, his good luck holds.

As Chapter 7 opens, Raskolnikov continues making blunder after blunder, while "luck" carries him through the murder and his escape. Though the murder scene itself is uncanny and hideous, it is at the same time, terribly ludicrous. No one has ever bungled so completely and so successfully.

After Alyona Ivanovna has been kind enough to look aside long enough for Raskolnikov to extricate his axe from the sling in which he has carried it, and to murder her, we watch him rushing about the apartment, gradually losing control, acting less reasonable with each moment that passes. First he tries the chest of drawers, then rushes back to be sure the old woman is dead—this time getting blood all over his hands and the axe. Then he returns to the chest,

> but he kept making mistakes; for instance, he would see that a key did not fit, but he kept trying it.

Then, having wasted this much time, when he should be making his escape, he forgets the decisions he had already reached:

> Suddenly he remembered the big key with the notches in the bit which was hanging there with the other small keys, and he realized that it could not possibly belong to the chest of drawers (the same idea had occurred to him the last time) but to some trunk or box . . .

Having got the trunk from under the bed and opened it, he begins to wipe the blood from his hands on the red trimmings of clothes, explaining this with the most insane logic:

> "It's red, and blood doesn't show so much on red," he thought to himself, but suddenly he came to his senses with a start. "Good Lord, am I going off my head?" he thought in a panic.

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At this point, he is interrupted by the entrance of Lisaveta. Having killed her, he very nearly loses all control:

> Raskolnikov almost lost his head. He picked up her bundle, threw it down again, and rushed out into the passage.

Then he comes back, but not to prepare his escape. As if he had not lost enough time already, he now falls

> into a kind of brown study or even reverie; there were moments when he seemed to forget everything, or . . . to start worrying about something that did not matter.

He does finally rouse himself enough to try to wash his hands and the hatchet, both of which are covered with Lisaveta's blood. Yet even while he knows that he is doing a poor job of this, he cannot make himself do it well:

> He realized . . . that his examination was too perfunctory, and that there might be something that would attract attention which had escaped his notice.

At this point, he has the very sensible reflection that he is possibly not in control of himself, that he was "not able to do anything to protect himself, and that, generally, he most probably should not be doing what he was doing now. . . ." Yet an even more shocking recognition awaits him:

> He stood there unable to believe his own eyes: the door, the front door, leading from the passage to the stairs, the same door before which he had so recently stood ringing the bell and through which he had come in, stood open, at least five inches open! Neither locked nor even latched all that time!

He has committed the "perfect crime" with the front door standing open; everyone in the apartment house could have been watching him.

Yet the only person who did come through that open door was Lisaveta. Why? In a narrative sense, this second murder may seem accidental and arbitrary. Yet no one can deny that the second murder "feels right" in the novel. In the first place, it is symbolically "right" in the Christian morality of the story. It shows how wrong Raskolnikov was in taking murder as a "mathematical problem"—in thinking he could overstep the moral law in one single instance, thereafter devoting himself to the welfare of mankind. Evil leads to evil; by committing the murder of a woman he hates,

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he has placed himself in a position where he must murder another woman whom he admires and pities.

There is, however, a symbology far under this, which is related to Sonia's beautiful question: "What have you done to yourself?" As I have pointed out, when he killed the pawnbroker woman, Raskolnikov was, at the deepest level of his thought, striking against himself, against that part of himself which is most like Alyona Ivanovna, like his mother, like Pashenka—that part of himself which is idle, passive, debt-collecting, "not worth its keep." His irrational hatred of Alyona Ivanovna is clearly a reflection of his self-hatred; his viciousness against her, a refusal to confess to the qualities he has shared with her.

Yet he can never escape those qualities except by confessing them. In killing Alyona Ivanovna, he has not obliterated the worst part of his personality, but (as the narrator in Dostoievsky's story, "White Nights," says) in committing a crime, the criminal "has destroyed what is best in him. . . ."[23] Thus it is that the simple, gentle Lisaveta (symbolically tied to Dunya, Sonia, and all the best qualities of Raskolnikov) must wander in to fall under the axe. Once dead, she does not rise again. The pawnbroker is another matter; by killing her, Raskolnikov has merely perpetuated her and everything usurious, cruel and tyrannical in his own personality. Refusing to stay dead, she will rise up and live in Raskolnikov's mind; we meet her there all too soon again in that nightmare where Raskolnikov will strike her again and again with the axe, yet she will not die. He bends down to discover that she has been laughing at him the whole time. The murder has made him more like her, not less; "What have you done to yourself," indeed!

This, too, suggests something about the sexual symbology of the murder itself, and helps account for some part of its uncanny phosphorescent glow. The murder itself has the appearance of an act of sexual aggression against the pawnbroker as a mother-figure. Raskolnikov's opening of the trunks, his theft of the purse "full to bursting," his fumbling with the keys:

> the moment he began fitting the keys into the drawers, the moment he heard their jingling, a sort of spasm passed over him. . . . He . . . picked up the keys and again began trying them. But for some reason

[23] A cancelled passage quoted in the Introduction to David Magarshack's translation of *Crime and Punishment*.

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> . . . the keys would not fit in any of the locks. . . . he kept making mistakes; . . . he would see a key did not fit, but he kept trying it. Suddenly he remembered the big key with the notches in the bit which was hanging there with the other small keys . . .

all these details seem strongly sexual. Yet, because of Raskolnikov's deep identification with Alyona Ivanovna, the murder must finally be seen not as an act of sexual violence directed against another; but rather as an act of self-destruction and "self-abuse." If sex is seen as an aggressive and harmful act, then this form of aggression, too, may be turned against the self. Thus, a desire to commit some sexual violence against the mother, or some substitute figure, might be turned into sexual self-assault, into a blameful rape upon the self. For Raskolnikov, the loss of Natalya Zarnitsyn must be very important: even though one cannot imagine any great sexuality in either Natalya or Raskolnikov, to lose her might still *symbolize* an important sexual privation and so might generate new aggressive sexuality which might, then, be turned back against the self. This onanistic pattern underlying the crime must partly account for the way Raskolnikov throws away the stolen money and articles, or hides them beneath a stone beside a urinal.[24] This, too, helps explain that little scene after the murder when Raskolnikov re-enacts the murder but puts himself more obviously in the victim's role: first he wanders "accidentally" under a passing carriage, then is whipped by the driver (who may be compared with Mikolka of the nightmare); a passing woman and her daughter take pity on him and charitably give him 20 copecks. He throws the money into the river.[25]

Thus, however much the murder appears an act directed toward the outside world, Raskolnikov sees his victim—like everything else in the world—only in terms of himself. And within minutes of murdering her, he will assume the same positions and attitudes which she had taken before. As soon as he realizes that the door is open,

> He rushe[s] to the door and bolt[s] it.
> "But what am I doing? I must get out of here! I must get out!"

There is no out except through confession. No sooner does he step into the hall than he hears footsteps—all the way from the

[24] Dostoievsky's second wife, Anna, reported that after they had been married a week, he took her to see the actual stone.

[25] Part II, Ch. 2.

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ground floor—and knows at once that they are coming "to the old woman." Raskolnikov darts back into the room just in time, latches the door, again, and stands breathless, clutching his hatchet.

> They were now opposite each other, with only the door between them, just as he and the old woman had been a short while ago when only the door separated them and he was listening intently.

Outside the door stands Koch, "a big fat man . . . a man of authority" who is joined at once by a younger man, "a future public prosecutor." "The whole thing was like a nightmare" to Raskolnikov, simply because he experiences these men as figures of his own creation and conscience. That is why, as he stands listening to them approaching on the steps:

> he felt as though he were turned to stone, as though it were all happening in a dream, where you are chased by a murderer who is getting nearer and nearer, but you are unable to stir, you seem to be rooted to the ground, unable even to lift your arm.

He is pursued by a murderer—by the only one he knows. And he would like, terribly, to surrender to those who can save him from himself:

> the thought occurred to him suddenly a few times to put an end to it all by shouting to them from behind the door. And, at times, he felt like starting cursing and taunting them, while they were still unable to open the door. "Oh, if only one could get it over quickly!" it flashed through his mind.

"Get it over quickly!" For he knows all along what he will have, eventually, to do. Yet he was never one to cut short his own suffering.

By the most fantastic set of coincidences and accidents, he will manage to escape and get back to his landlady's house, will manage to return the axe and get into his room. But only to prolong his agony. As soon as he can get on his feet again, he will be back, ringing the bell, looking around the room, asking about the blood, torturing himself in the most horrible ways. Then, too, he will be flirting with the police, hinting to them, dropping clues all over St. Petersburg. He will be in a perfect agony every time their suspicion seems to turn from him. And when, finally, Sonia and Porfiry have brought him to see what he has done to himself and Svidrigaylov has shown him the logical next step, suicide, then at last he will stop, turn, go to the police who would not come to him, and confess.

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VERNON WATKINS

Muse, Poet and Fountain

No living man may compass what I seek.
No eye outside my own may judge these things;
And mine are downcast that my hand may speak.
In me tears end; from me the fountain springs.

Though time still falls from future into past,
Nothing is gone my hand may not restore.
Mine is the pulse that makes your pulse beat fast,
Harmonious joy with stillness at the core.

I am your peace, wherever fortune move you,
Your strength, your birthright and your native ground.
I wait to give, whether men scorn or love you,
Prodigal strength, returning to my sound.
Not while you live, but when grass waves above you,
When you are dead, your labour shall be crowned.

Sonnet

To Certain Ancient Anonymous Poets

Poets, like ancient streams which time like sand
Covers, across your lyric utterance thrown,
Found again fresh, emerging from dark stone.
Though dead, through you the leaves of life expand.
Ah, were it possible to understand
The life sung down to men, then each alone
Might fix his eyes where envies are undone,
Nor feel an exile in his native land.

I thought of such a power when first I grew
As might control base passions from those tombs
Where laurels rest and the acacia blooms,
But now I find it where the ground wears rue.
Always it is from joy my music comes
And always it is sorrow keeps it true.

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WINTHROP PALMER

Woman

The conch, a mouthful of water, an ear to the sand
Has the sea by the belly.
A bird, with the feathers on his back and a few notes,
Sounds the depths of an emperor's heart.
Your love, held in your hand or rubbed on your chest
Lasts all day.

What is wanted can be had. The hawk face,
The stiff bonnet of the hatchet,
The padded shoulders of the sofa,
A few lines floating the flags of color,
Or shape, holding its corner of space.

She answers to many names, stones, sounds.
In your age of hunger you have her in your mouth,
In the rage of rivalry she fastens to your hand
The instruments of war. Much older than Death
She sees him coming.

Two Songs

Estate

The tiger and the bear were rugs. But the girls were real
And the birch waving a naked arm to the crabs
In their wigs of yellow weed
And the bluff lifting its great nose
Over the twitching lips of the bay.

Four Sixes and a Nine

The skeleton walks in confetti,
Cats cry in their cradles,
Window, you can drop your glass.
The taxi has fired his trumpet,
And the train shoves into the station
A foot finding its boot.

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JOHN HAAG

Winter Wheat

The flung seed in the furrow, under clods,
Clings by a root and waits the winter out.
Hibernal winds level their long shrouds
Over the field, carefully, but the heat
Locked in each seed compels it to survive.
The ice-hard earth can mother nothing now;
No shoots can suckle, no green efforts give
Their promise to the watching winter crow.

The stones wait, and the ice-choked river waits.
The huddled crow listens with head aslant
For the first creak of shifting ice. The light
Enters the orchard slowly, somnolent
Among stick-figure trees, and silhouettes
A remnant apple on an upper branch;
Spreading across the field, it penetrates
And stays. The waning snow goes, inch by inch.

Ice on the river cracks, a cannonade
To celebrate the crocus, and the sap
Starts in the orchard. Each indentured seed
Wakes to the motion, swayed from a long sleep;
And as a young sun drives the final drift
Under the wall's protection, they assist
With tender spears. Nor could a lean crow's theft
Effect a breach in this resurgent host.

Now, in the swelter of an august wind,
I walk the fence-rows and anticipate
The full sheaves, for the shining scythes are honed;
I watch the mowers moving through the wheat,
The ponderous cadence and the sudden blade,
Accurate in its arc; and when the grain
Drums on the threshing floor, I shall divide
And annotate those pellets of the sun.

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ROGER SHATTUCK

Open Road For Boys

Tornado Alley, May 1957

Like hell it's round
it's flat
and wet
    two months of rain leave Oklahoma
    in the bottom of the pan no gold
    but something else worth more and dirtier
Why don't you leeeehhuuuuvv me
twangs the radio
we'll do just that
except you need a surface on these greasy roads

    The needle quivers just at 70
    I quiver just at 33
    too old to die young and not yet middle aged
    "professor" of fricasseed French and skywriting
    unknown but promising
    driving 1000 miles nonstop to Iowa
    to celebrate (100 years too late) *Les Fleurs du Mal*
    bee for Baudelaire in the Bible belt

    So who dropped out they hit on me to speak?

Straight through from Dennison to Muskogee the pumps
the hammer-headed man-sized praying mantises
suck juice out of the dead frontier
it reeks of oil
and still the filling stations never change
26 and 28 "save three cents" like hell
that way
I figure maple syrup costs as much in Rutland
as in San Antone
it don't add up
free enterprise to feed the fat

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distribute the wealth equitably among the rich
no use to try another burg for price or size or speed
they got us taped inside this continent
and turn out fifteen million twelvetone dreamlined traps a year
for folks to play cross-country crinkle-fender in
the only exit's through the roof the sky they call it
west of Illinois
blue water sky you know the limit
come on squirrel who cares let's spin this whitewall cage
let's chase the Indians and Greeks right out of I-oh-way
Osceola Oskaloosa Ottumwa Corydon Sigourney
redskins and eggheads the whole damn bunch
don't stop this side of Winterset or Centerville
it reeks of good old USA

then wee-wee-wee-wee
all the way home

oh why do you take to the open road?
my wife's hair burns like brandy
What will you say when you grow old?
Baudelaire was a dandy

DAVID PAUL

Shame

from Rimbaud

So long as the knife hasn't cut
This parcel of grey and green,
White bone, jelly and fat,
This vapourizing brain . . .

(Oh him, he ought to slit
His nose, lips and ears,
His belly too, and let
His legs drop to the shears!)

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No, but all the same,
Until neck hits the blade
And bowels meet the flame
And stones break the head

Till this traitor and truant
Has been tried in the fire,
He'll never cease for a moment
To hedge, dodge, and be a liar,

Like a Rocky Mountain cat
Stinking to heaven and to earth!
—True enough, oh God! But let
Someone say a prayer at his death.

To Bed At Noon

from Rimbaud

Leaf-hid, the wolf howled in his den,
Spitting out the snowy plumes
Of his breakfast, a fat hen.
Like his, my life consumes.

Time's ripe! Tooth's on edge
For fresh lettuce, melting fruits;
—But there's a spider in the hedge
Lives on nothing but violets.

So let me sleep! Let me simmer
On the altars of Solomon,
Boil over in a hissing river
And fall to the torrents of Khedron.

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DAVID WAGONER

The Satirists

With verminous ringlets leaping on their wigs,
They staggered through the city, stuttering rage
At a world pulled inside-out by hypocrites:
Lace to their elbows, elbows steeped in swill,
The carpet-knights answered like Latin-mongers;
The acrobats and prigs guffawed in the dark
To praise, like cats, the tickling end of the quill.

O indignation lit their cheeks like chilblains,
And while their gouty great-toes pulsed on the stones,
Gin Lane flocked out to chorus "Up Smocks All";
Ambition rolled with Simony in the streets
Where life lay squeezed into its opposites.
"Reform!" they shouted, but their voices wheezed
Like drainpipes through an ever-thickening phlegm.
"Blindmen!" they cried, and jumped out of their shoes,
But still the pock-faced pimps gnawed at the moon.

Toasting themselves with black and yellow bile,
They turned splenetic wisdom to the wall,
Weeping for Horses and the City of Christ
Or country pleasures beaten into holes;
Those great blood-let, exacerbated men—
Foredoomed to choke like thieves on their own tongues—
All muttered, "Cover your hearts and trim them close,"
While they lurched home to cork anonymous wives.

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BENJAMIN DE MOTT

Glossing a Portuguese Diary

Entry for a wet winter evening, the end of a stay at a port quinta *on the Douro River in the north country:*

—The Colonel's nephew, N., came into view tonight, and the result was A Moment. Could it have been predicted? Not by an Amurrican, surely. N. is Oxbridge, thirty-two, unmarried; third man once in a no-capital London publishing house now defunct, subscriber to the *New Statesman, Spectator,* and *Universities and Left*—great unread mounds of the first two in a litter on the floor at one side of his bedroom desk —and owner of a red Austin Sprite, a Webcor tape recorder, and a store of used tapes (a "library" of Portuguese song, dance, "interviews:" symbols of the old and the true, the pure European past). He came out eighteen months ago from England after an operation, intending to spend a warm October; at the moment he has no plans for returning. When he spoke the first night he sounded unlike the usual thoughtful traveller, the character who claims to be fascinated with Portugal and in fact only sees the place through books. In diffident voice with touches of irony, After The Ladies Had Left and while the Colonel gently snored over his glass, he explained the country—as follows:

"The old man" (Salazar) believes that the modern world can be bled a bit, enough to support a revitalization of Portuguese tradition. "The old man" believed this thirty years ago and believes it still and (despite current talk) may well have a successor who agrees with him. For the country to exist it needs a certain amount of foreign coin, hence it slicks out main roads and their environs, certain cities and towns, tourist areas—Estoril of course and the whole Costa do Sol—in a way that wins friends and justifies the adjective in the favorite p. r. phrase: Portugal, the New State. The country also needs to expand its industrial plant, if it is to put an end to money crises—hence it worries about transportation, harries its businessmen about inefficiency, improves the education of some of the populace, and proceeds (slowly) with a public health program. But Newness isn't really desired at all: the object is to achieve what is necessary for survival without accepting any "fundamentally indigestible" element of modern civilization. A strong Church, a Responsible Aristocracy, A Protected Womanhood, and a Guild System—these are the ideals, while Admass and illiterate literacy and consumers' madness and faceless labor organization (N. did not use the word America in this speech) are the enemies.

Who let in Lady Docker? N. shrugged at this and grinned when mention was made of his fleet Sprite and the splendid indigestible nickelodeons (assembled by an English firm in Spain) that belt out rock and roll at Estoril and Praia da Rocha, and certainly the subject

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seemed to die naturally. And during the wilderness excursions of the last days—Tras-os-Montes, rambles through great stone fields gaping at nature's Henry Moores, pauses in remote villages, an hour spent watching village dancers perform "as they did five hundred years ago" —the party came together at moments (again: as it seemed) in a decent consciousness of guilt. Even at today's picnic, eaten in a drizzle in a ruined Cistercian monastery under the eyes (was it only for the last five minutes?) of a peasant mother and child. A lavish meal as always—pink gins, three kinds of pâté, turkey, beef, sweetbreads, port brandy, taken with much hilarity until the audience came. The audience stood in an archway: the mother a dirty, stately woman with a swaddled baby in her arms—"They won't give *up* swaddling"—and a daughter, say, five years old at her side. Keeping out of the rain, watching patiently, uttering no word, none of the hissing *pobre, pobre* of the trained *mendigo* back home. The Colonel's chauffeur was dispatched with a bagful of leavings, picked bones, gnawed slabs of bread, pits and tins; he handed it to the child as the mother unsmiling half-curtsied (N. answered by touching his hatbrim), and the child peeked in at the contents. Her expression—shy glee, mistrust, wonder—stopped the throat. She darted away, the mother curtsied again, and thereafter: an awkward silence. The impression then was that seemly self-laceration was in process, and perhaps for an instant a memory of some item of his past, "leftism and all that," did trouble N. But to judge from tonight's stories, the main effect of the occasion was to clarify a vision.

"A fine place for a vision—" this could be (will be) written in the guestbook without a trace of hypocrisy. The low-ceilinged, bare-beamed, white diningroom upstairs floated in a sea of heavy odors—duck, orange, flaming brandy, port, Jermyn Street cigars. Rain beating along the shutters on the river side, monster *serra* dogs grumbling on the hearth, aching for a Heathcliffian boot, the Colonel dozing (bobbing and weaving), N. hidden in smoke. Levitation proceeded. N. had not been in the country long, he said ruminatively, when he'd naturally felt compelled to go to Porto in search of a girl: how was he to explain why he had found not a common slut but a creature whose interest in him was utterly personal, warm, open—absolutely determined to put money out of consideration? Hard to answer though not disquieting—but what would come next? N. poured and resumed. He was not sentimental, he argued, but he could remember—here the Colonel grunted awake and the dogs growled and the fire cracked loudly and the candles guttered and the wind thomped—did the Colonel remember the night when Merido and [a Debretted eminence from England] were here in this room? Something extraordinary that night, a ripple of ancient feeling had gone round the room that night—unforgettable. The eminence and his lady were opening a library in ——, they'd come over for the weekend and the Colonel had invited his old steward to be of the party for a meal. Merido, the steward, had served the Colonel and his father faithfully, had profited at the first war by selling some timbered acreage

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at just the proper moment, on the Colonel's father's advice, and then had gone on to become a modest landholder. As they came to the table the old steward—grizzly fellow of great dignity and poise though moist-eyed—spoke for the first time, saying he was pleased that his excellency found it agreeable that a former carpenter and son of a carpenter be invited to sit at table with him. The eminence raised his eyebrows, offered a place deferentially with his hand, then smilingly reminded the old man that in history there had indeed been carpenters with whom official fools refused to break bread, and would anyone call them blessed? A beautiful speech, said N. generously, voice rising a little, a quality to the situation that belonged to another age despite all incongruities. Something there you couldn't see as Tories and Labor, hear-hear, said the Colonel pouring, the dogs rose loudly and stretched and sighed. Whereupon the noise of the rain or a look of embarrassed puzzlement that he caught whipped N. on to a summit. "Do y'know something else? Apropos your nickelodeons and whatever. They don't matter. They don't go *deep,* is the truth. I remember the second time I was around your lot, Estoril, the Costa. I was coming back in the car via Sintra, starting my trip on the *Estrada.* Out came the sirens, a god-awful racketing, Warra-Warra!"—the dogs bounded up roaring, the Colonel bellowed affably at them—"it was the President coming by with his motorcycles and his old Cadillac. He uses a summer palace at Cascais, perhaps you know. I heard the noise and just in the moment I saw a peasant woman, somebody's cook I expect, coming up from the station. I'd gone in to the curb thinking the siren was the *bombeiros*—I happened to look at her as they came by and what do you think?" (Pausing embattled, holding the eye.)

"She knelt."

N. let his breath out, relaxing. "The sense of dignity, there's what it is," he said more kindly, holding a dog's head in a hammerlock against his chest, blowing at the smoke to see his audience. "You dignify yourself by respecting, honoring in that way. I can tell you—without that feeling, without knowing it you haven't got a politics, you haven't—" A shutter crashed finishing this, banishing nickelodeons, Cadillacs, prosperous whores from the air. "It's true," he nodded again, "she knelt—she knelt as though actually the Virgin Herself were in passage. . . ."

The Colonial English thus presented to the mind make a man wince, months after he has left them, in sympathy for their wounds and lost hopes. But their fantasies, to use the rudest word, are more relevant than might be supposed. Relevant to what? To the official program of the country, first of all, as this can be made out from sights and sounds and printed words—Salazar's *Doctrine and Action* (1939, Faber), for example, and various interviews with him that have been published in France and elsewhere in the past two decades. Since the chosen rhetoric of the program is statistical (Salazar is an economist), the thing has

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about it, as a mere abstraction, a queer cast of modernity, and its details bespeak a powerful faith in rigorous planning and specification. Specify the proper level of education for each position in the state down to the level of private chauffeur, specify (for a public housing project) which block is to be occupied by cabdrivers, which block is to be occupied by postmen, specify when the local workmen's associations (Sindicatos) and Employers' Associations (Grémios) and Agricultural Syndicates (Casas do Povo) are to be recognized, abolished, federated, refederated, incorporated, or reincorporated.[1] But the planners do look backward—to the happy serf, the resident landlord, Woman in the Home; in using the idiom and technology of advanced socio-economics their ultimate purpose is, just as the Englishman indicated, to shore up a closed and piously anti-modern society. Which means that when you speak glowingly of bended knees, you address yourself to Portuguese life in terms officially regarded as highly appropriate.

Nor would it be right to claim that these terms are everywhere and always inappropriate. Eyes unsharpened by a thousand nights in Soho still turn up evidence of their own that the manners of Portuguese simple folk belong to another age. Down from the hills come the vintage workers in a winding file, aware that two weeks of almost unutterably exhausting labor lie ahead: the lady owner of the *quinta* goes out to welcome them: their leader sweeps his cap to the ground saying, *Minha senhora,* we would have a vintage every month for the pleasure of working your lugares. At a nine-thirty sunset in Alcacer the hugely rich proprietor of an enormous ranch climbs out of a Mercedes in a barnyard as a procession of blackhatted, blackshawled, barefooted girls comes across the meadow after the workday: seeing him they fall silent, he lifts his hand, calls out to one by name, and all salute and reply in low, slow, sombre voices, apologetic for the noise of their conversation, *Boa-tarr-r-r-de:* he joshes another and sets them gratefully smiling. At a bullfight in the Campo Pequeno in Lisbon, the country's most famous entertainer, the fadoist Amalia Rodriguez, rises to make her way out early and is stopped by an old fellow wearing a threadbare suit and a stained goatee, a stranger to her party; with no air of offense all pause in leisurely respectful interest as he takes her fingers to his lips and makes a brief speech expressing (with an easy gesture) the esteem felt for the singer by those behind him in the cheaper seats. Major J. attached to the American advisory military group drives his tailfinned

[1] Shortly after a new constitution was adopted in 1933 a Labor Statute was "passed" which created the first of these odd groups—paper guilds, as it were. There are now hundreds of them, all organized into Federations, and there is a note of toy cash register fun in their formation. (In the last few years sixty new Casas do Povo have been formed, which in turn have been organized into thirteen Federations.) The Federations are gathered under the rubric "Full Corporations" of which there are now eight, covering the various industries. The Corporations, government-managed of course, "police" the Federations, and also undertake certain benevolent roles, as for example the management of holiday centers for workers.

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CD stationwagon up to his rented house in Carcavelos and before he sounds the horn his gardener and the gardener's son have drawn back the gates with grave punctilio, as for a royal progress. "I serve the Queen of Spain," says a groom of the Countess of Barcelona grandly, smiling at coronets sewn on a stinking horse blanket in Estoril; we represent "pride of service" is the unspoken word of the servingmaids of Lady X who stand at drilled attention before a luncheon sideboard in the oldest house in Lisbon. The flow of courtesy soothes not only the local gods—the ducal Palmellas, Marqueses de Sabugosa, Condes de Carnide and the rest—and a hundred displaced lords and ladies of the Continent (they flock to the Costa and stay to echo the words of the much-mocked Lady Docker, who told *The Telegraph,* Oh yes she was coming here again and again, people treat you the way one expects to be treated, now yis they does), but the meanest tourist in a three dollar *pensao* as well.

For the obeisance or abasement implicit in such courtesy—and of course for foreign visionaries who cherish it—the liberal has a ready contempt. On his view nothing matters except that Portugal has "no freedom, no morality, no bread." The last phrase was made by General Delgado, who at present is seeking support on the Continent for Portuguese insurgent groups, and it needs little amplification. There is cruel poverty behind nearly every working class door in the north and south, and Unesco health statistics give the lie to those who say that sunshine is food. And as for the accusation, "no freedom," it is borne out by one or another "political" event every month. A poorly planned attempt at revolution is put down—military men, workers and priests jailed; Salazar appears on television, coldly defining the range of criticism that can be tolerated by the government; a few weeks pass and then in Lisbon the Portuguese Civil Army ("private citizens available only in the event of a national emergency") parades in green before silent crowds, displaying weapons that include the never obsolete Chicago submachinegun. The visitor to Porto is told that several factory workers have been released after two years of imprisonment (without a trial) on charges of having sought to organize a union. He returns to Lisbon and learns that three professors at the university have been jailed for having written and caused to circulate a pamphlet complaining against the government's refusal to allow an English socialist into the country. When this episode is nearly "forgotten," word comes that Aquilino Ribeiro, a novelist said to have been writing in a simple realistic vein about life in the north, is to be brought to bar on some spurious charge. At any moment, in any city, the foreign paper that had hitherto been available at the *tabacaria* fails to turn up, and the newsdealer answers inquiry with the word, *Censura;* local journals are rarely less than evasive in their reporting of domestic news; a major daily that displeases the Censor has its press run trucked off to the Campo Grande and burned. It is all in the well-known grain: a political reality that constantly rouses (in a small circle) fury and frustra-

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tion impossible to sophisticate into something other than what it is: a pure response to the suppression of personal freedom.

But although the liberal who concentrates here, on the black reality of the poverty-ridden totalitarian state, is considerably easier to admire than a man keening for What We Have Lost, and although the Marxist analysis he could make of a dozen elements in the national situation could not fail to enlighten, the depressing truth remains that his language is only a little more adequate for the expression of the Portuguese circumstances of greatest interest than the jargon of *noblesse oblige*. To say this is of course meaningless without specifying the nature of the circumstances. And the latter is an unrewarding task, for the circumstances in question seem at first glance a mere matter of jokes and juxtapositions, clashes of old and new: insignificant items at best. Granted the clash mentioned; granted that certain sections of the country offer a distracting topographical comedy featuring endless cheap gags about Time; granted that on the Glamorous Estrada of the Costa Alfa-Romeos toot wildly passing donkey carts, French girls in winter Bikinis buy pastry from Portuguese women drowning in a thousand layers of black, and *kitsch* castles (baroque air-conditioned grotesquery put up in imitation of the Tower of Belem), and luxury hotels in the International Style, and private houses (on the model of swell St. Augustine or Santa Barbara) are separated by brooks, fields and gulches where women beat sheets on boards, oxen pull wooden plows and farm workers build family dwellings of cane and clay—granted all this, why should any of it count? With contrasts of the same sort littering every town from Baghdad to Mobile, why give them so much as a word?

Partly (to come at once to an answer) because their absurdity stands as a precise analogue for the contradictions of means and ends in official policy that were hinted at before. Knowing that its factories are inefficient, and believing that uninterested, careless workers are to blame, the government exhorts the latter in a thousand ways to lay by what Salazar himself speaks of as the national inferiority complex—the unmistakable darkness, the sense of hopelessness expressed in the national music. Whitewash your village buildings once a year! (The painting program was not undertaken solely to impress foreign tourists but to alter a psychological landscape.) Think constantly on our possessions! (Public buildings are adorned with huge maps of Europe which have an overlay of Portuguese territories establishing that "Portugal" is in point of area greater than Europe; the maps bear the legend, "Portugal is no small country.") Hear no fados! (Salazar has set himself firmly against this music on the ground that it is narcotic in effect.) So much from the voice of authority—but so much and a great deal more. Be proud! demands the voice—but also: Know your place and don't move from it! Be gay, full of hope!—but also: Honor those above you, accept the iron order which specifies your position, the thin range of your pleasures, the proper intensity of your piety. While the contradiction im-

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plicit in such instructions may bring to mind a comic turn—Willie Howard on the soapbox finishing a grand peroration, then darting out a finger at his single auditor and shouting fiercely: "Form a circle!"—the joke is cruelly manipulative and issues in bewilderment too poignant to draw a smile.[2]

For a traveler it is of course possible to step back from this bewilderment, to ignore it or to regard the discovery of some item that occasions it as a ground for self-congratulation. A hint of the latter policy is present in the *New Statesman* reports that touch now and then on the alteration of psychological landscape just mentioned: these seem to suggest that, since a keen eye never misses the skull beneath the skin, the squalor under the paint, the only lesson in such an alteration is that liberals see through all Stunts and Lies. But plainly such a treatment will not do. Whether or not the Portuguese is melancholy and dark, he is beyond question often hungry and sick, and when he is in this condition The Stunt, the transformation of his landscape, the false claim that here the glossy radiance of nature is mirrored in the things of man, can only mock his weakness. In Spain there is a unity of anguish for the eye, the mind, the memory; the "sense manifold" contradicts nothing, combines and mingles with the truths of history in a way that permits the wounded Spaniard to *be* his landscape. Hundreds of political prisoners are rotting in Burgos in sight of the splendid cathedral, yet it is fair to say that the filth-strewn city is all one, and for this reason, because a thousand seams of wretchedness are allowed to show through, it becomes a fit image of the heartshaking pride and humiliation of its citizenry. But the ruined Portuguese goes an alien's progress through most of his villages. Drive northward on the Coimbra road and you pass one dazzling town after another, every dooryard neatly bricked, no mud, jasmine afire in the air, public fountains gleaming, walls radiant, almond blossoms seeming almost to twinkle

[2] The poor are not alone in this experience of bewilderment. Ambitious men, those who win a measure of economic power and place themselves in position to satisfy the appetites stimulated by news from The Funhouse abroad, seem nevertheless to be required to regard themselves simultaneously as heroes and villains. As matters stand, if a manufacturer drives himself hard, he may contribute to the necessary improvement of Portuguese trade balances. But if in doing so he becomes what is called A Success, he only qualifies for a fresh share of the new national guilt. His wife clicks about the Chiado on high heels, arranges canasta parties, enters the World—while the Official Voice insists that the one proper place for her is at home. (When Teddy Boy vandalism—Portugal has not bothered to invent a name of its own for delinquents—broke out recently at Queluz and at Praia das Macas, the Police Communique in the press blamed the trouble mainly on the wives of rich businessmen who leave their children to domestics and spend their days at cards while their husbands pursue their *negociatas*.) And at any moment this same Voice is likely to hunt him down in his office with the complaint that his methods are alien, as they indeed in one sense are, to Our Higher Goals. (A few months ago, deprecating "cutthroat practices"—meaning American-style hustle and ruthlessness—the Portuguese Secretary of State for Commerce charged angrily that "the sharpest competition which a Portuguese businessman has to face, both at home and abroad, comes from other business firms in this country.")

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whiteness out of the washed crystalline sky, clouds of wildflowers, uncorrupted green fields—a unified picturesque, a landscape of Snow White and the Dwarfs that refuses the starving or the halt even the comfort of an image of their own despair.

But there are always the healthy, it is said—what good would such comfort be to them? The assumption of the question is that the national schizophrenia does not affect everyone, that there are people who experience no violent yoking of opposite impulses, feel no cross-time beating in their brains. A mistaken assumption, to judge from the number of characters whose lives, while seeming to establish the possibility of "successful transition," in point of fact stand for chaos itself. In Lisbon four years ago Snr. A., a man now in his late thirties who speaks and writes several languages with grace and works as the chief of the parts division of the largest sports car dealer in Portugal, was asked by his employer to drive a car for the firm in a celebrated French race. The purpose of the entry was to secure local publicity for the firm, and the Lisbon papers cooperated enthusiastically for some weeks before the race, carrying on their front pages pictures of the firm's elegant showrooms, stories about the car, the driver, the nature of the contest. Unfortunately Snr. A. had an accident during the race which demolished the car and sent him to the hospital for three months. At the end of this period his employer made a payroll deduction arrangement which returned Snr. A. to the serf's condition, by "enabling" him to reimburse the firm not only for the ruined car but also for the expense of his medical care. And for the past four years the man has been working off this burden, living in the city on less than fifty dollars a month; he wears an abstracted expression, occasionally lacerates himself ("I made a mistake"), and sees his employer as a just and honorable master. Again: in the town of Maniche, Izaura B., a domestic aged seventeen and a handsome girl, no longer works with her mother in the evenings learning how to spell out words in an old newspaper, rising from the Vale of Illiteracy (her mother has had two months of schooling); Izaura's master has given her an old phonograph and she spends her evenings in a white mud hut (since Maniche is on the much travelled road from Sintra to Estoril and hence is visible to tourists, the town has electricity) listening over and over again to an LP of *Wonderful Town*. The priest's opinion has not yet been given. Or again: slim schoolboys from the Colegio de . . . , forbidden the Cinema, used to gather at noon every day at the Tamariz beach to gaze at naked foreign women lying on the sands, but one of their number, a boy of good family, attacked a woman in her cabana, with the result that all are now restricted to the football field. The boy in question is said to have explained that as he passed he was certain the woman "signalled" to him (the lady in the case has "admitted" that she might have been letting down a shoulder strap preparing to take the sun at the moment the boy went by), and to have indicated that the official or unofficial word passed in the school is that the

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women of the Costa in Bikinis are without exception French whores.

But the multiplication of examples—mere incongruities and jokes—is pointless. Just as the Truth of Hunger cannot be read in a single expression and the Truth of Fealty cannot be read in a single bended knee, so the Truth of Discontinuity cannot be discovered in the outer pattern of any one life. What counts is that there is such a truth, and that (puzzlingly) it has in Portugal the force of revelation. The abstractions that summarize it have, admittedly, little power to move (who can be griefstruck because a state which opens itself to modern experience for the purpose of re-enacting the past proves merely that the state too is no master of time?) Even at the very moment of confrontation with a paradox, some sign of the total manipulation of life, the throat does not sob itself sick as in adolescence, crying out: All life is a Production and a Stunt. But despite this, despite the long awareness of how swiftly a technology bent on directing can turn experience into a crazy drum, a fresh encounter with the two-timing does have the power to shock. And the memory of the shock persists. Long after gentle melancholy voices and the shouting sun are forgotten the mind runs back bemused to the kneeling woman never seen, that light of the Englishman's vision: whether she knelt for the President or for Our Lady, says the picture, all she was after on the Merritt Parkway was mercy, mercy from the Beaters, the Contrivers, and the idea of that, the idea of asking . . .

A needling wonder in the brain—perhaps this is what the country is: or a souvenir miracle of some sort. Whatever the right name for it, the place is best avoided by travelers who would prefer to return not *pitying us all.*

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NORMAN N. HOLLAND

How New? How Vague?

MANKIND WOULD BE A LOT HAPPIER, Freud says someplace, with a little less concern for goodness and a little more for truth. He could have been providing a motto for *la nouvelle vague,* the so-called new wave of young French film directors that glutted the little market-fair at Cannes last year and whose films are duly percolating into the American art-houses. The name presumably will prove no more descriptive than any of the other recent group terms, Angry Young Men, Beat Generation, or, for that matter, Bug-Eyed Monsters. *L.n.v.* is *nouvelle,* really, only in that it refers to a group of relatively young men, many in their late twenties, who have yet produced little new in the way of scripts or camera work.

Much more to the point is the other, the macaronic question, How vague? Very. For one thing, the *n.v.* director tends to abandon the ordinary meanwhile-back-at-the-farm omniscience of the film in favor of a point-of-view approach closer to a novelist's vision than that of a *cinéaste.* We see the events of the film with one of the characters; we know what he knows, and we mistake as he does. More important, we cannot judge him, for we cannot see beyond him. The technique is hardly a new one—one of the best examples is David Lean's *Brief Encounter* of 1945—but this point-of-view approach does fit in with the devoutly amoral approach of the *n.v.* Typically, the film starts from the assumption that traditional values have become an empty formalism that serves no purpose but to stultify and make wretched. Beyond this hardly novel gambit, the films offer us for morals only the proverbial Gallic shrug. The amorality gets so devout, it becomes a kind of morality of its own, just as the great stress on the director's objectivity paradoxically but predictably leads to a highly personal style. Nevertheless, the single most striking ripple in *la nouvelle vague* seems to me this unwillingness to comment, to dilute the unrelenting concern for "truth" with much bother at all about "goodness."

Louis Malle's *The Lovers*[1] stands as a sort of stylistic nucleus for the movement. The story is that grand old French chestnut, a woman's awakening to love. Indeed, the film is a free adaptation of an eighteenth-century story; the very first image, the background for the credits, is a traditional *carte de tendre.* We see the whole thing from the point of view of the wife. Bored with her husband, an intelligent but busy newspaper publisher of Dijon, Jeanne makes long trips to

[1] *Les Amants:* written and directed by Louis Malle; script, M. Malle and Louise de Vilmorin; featuring as the wife, Jeanne Moreau in a superb performance; Maggy, Judith Magré; the husband, Alain Cuny; the lover, José-Luis de Villalonga; the student, Jean-Marc Bory.

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visit her friend Maggy in Paris, where she has taken a glamorous polo-player as a lover; he, unfortunately, bores her about as much as her husband does. That worthy, becoming suspicious, insists on Maggy and the lover coming down for a weekend. On the way down, the wife's car gives out and she gets a reluctant lift from a taciturn archaeology student, who, when he delivers her, is also asked to stay. At dinner, the husband succeeds in his aim of humiliating his wife in the eyes of Maggy and the lover by seeming every bit as charming and devoted as she has been telling them he is not. Fed up with all of them, Jeanne runs into the student after the others have gone to bed, spends a wildly lyrical summer night of love with him, and they run off together the next morning.

The scenes of love, naturally enough, are the most interesting. In the first, the lovers wander like two dreamy moons through dark woods and fifteen minutes of silence from the sound track; then joyously they return to the house for further jollities in bed and bathtub, the sharp blacks and whites of night relaxing into the prosaic greys of dawn and reality. The first sequence has a ghostly, midnight beauty, quite poetic and rather overstated; the second is frank and fleshy. Done slowly and with almost excessive care, these two explicit but marvellously tactful sequences, even though they last well nigh half the film, are not outsized, for they fulfill and complement earlier images. For example, the lovers in the night, the wife in her white nightgown, the student in his white shirt, slow, gliding, graceful, answer, as it were, an earlier sequence of frantic white lights blazing and glaring against the dark—the wife and her polo player forcing gaiety at an amusement park. Throughout the first half of the film, Malle shows the wife staring into mirrors, a way, I suppose, of saying she is narcissistic. After the lovemaking, the mirrors show us not one, but two faces, the wife and her new lover; Malle seems to be saying the archaeologist has dug through her tired narcissistic shell to find the essential loving woman beneath. Once more, we see her sole, aging face in a mirror as she wonders how long she can hold the love of this much younger man. The water of the love scenes is in its own way a dark and mythic mirror, one in which the self is lost, obscured for a mystical consummation of rebirth and awakening.

Of course, the action is wildly improbable: a wife, even a bored one, does not desert her daughter, her husband, her lover, her whole world, to rush off with a man she has known only for twelve hours and didn't like much at that. Women are too practical. You could justify the plot as a kind of existentialist action; Jeanne has become *engagée* for the first time in her life, and she acts on that involvement, rising above the metaphors of motors, animals, and play-acting that have hitherto described her life. She finds, you could say, her own being. You could say that, but the film would still on those terms stand for the pubescent morality of Broadway, that neo-misunderstood Freudianism that provides the distinctive sentimentality of our age: to quote Mrs. Kowalski,

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"There are things that happen between a man and a woman in the dark—that sort of make everything else seem—unimportant."

Two things save Malle's film from this interestingly limited *weltanschauung*. First, we see virtually everything from Jeanne's point of view. We are as puzzled as she whether the pretty girl at her husband's newspaper plant is his mistress or not. The overstated lyricism of the love scenes represents not Malle's but *her* reaction; the ambiguities in her husband's character are ambiguities to *her*. We know no more, no less than she, and the film resolutely avoids any suggestion that what she does is right or wrong (unlike, say, *Brief Encounter* where a similar use of point of view is spoiled by the picture's implication that the wife is right.) Malle undercuts the sentimentality a second way, by a new approach to that old cinematic crux—what to do with the sound track? In any truly cinematic film, the verbal information delivered by the sound tends to be redundant to the visual information from the picture. Malle has taken a radical tack, using a voice on the sound track which overlays the action with blatantly superfluous commentary, speaking of the characters as third persons as though they were in some story out of the past. Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* and Marcel Hanoun's *Une Simple Histoire* (which had not been released in this country at time of writing) use the technique even more fully, I am told. The technique, however, stems ultimately I think from Japanese Nō plays; there, a character as he acts will also narrate his actions, speaking of himself in the third person and the past tense. In the Nō play, the words give a sense of fate, a feeling that the event was an inevitable part of an old story that must happen again as it has been told before. Malle's use of the device carries in addition a Gallic shrug, that faint sense of the ridiculous that any man must feel as he watches himself dispassionately, an irony crucial to sustaining the director's neutrality in *The Lovers*.

A similar but far less successful step toward truth and away from goodness is taken by François Truffaut's *The 400 Blows*,[2] which took the Best Direction Prize at Cannes. (I sometimes think French film makers have festivals the way American cigarette manufacturers have testing services.) Truffaut has announced he wanted to make a film about a child without any of the usual prettification for the coos of the menopause set. In that he has succeeded, but unfortunately he has paid the price of significance for it. His film details the miseries of a twelve- or thirteen-year-old boy, misunderstood by his promiscuous mother and his easy-going *cocu* of a father. In sharp contrast with these tiresome realities are the silly fakeries of the world imposed on the child by the adult establishment, notably the tyrannical school. Contrasted to the cheery fantasies of the movies (Truffaut puts in a plug for his friend Rivette's *Paris Nous Appartient*) or a children's puppet show

[2] *Les Quatre Cents Coups:* produced and directed by François Truffaut; screenplay by M. Truffaut and Marcel Moussy; featuring as the boy, Jean-Pierre Leaud; the mother, Claire Maurier; the father, Albert Remy.

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(some of the best shots in the film are of children spellbound by the puppets), the school feeds the children dear little fables which seem, somehow, no longer to apply. In a sense you could sum up the discrepancy between the false world imposed on the child and the real world of adults by the progression from the impossible post-office pen the boy must use in school to the fountain pen he really uses to the typewriter he steals and for which his parents send him off to reform school.

The one recurring image of the film is escape: all the characters break out of the limits imposed on them by society and pretty much get away with it. The father has his sportscars, the mother her affairs; both are efforts to break out of their tiny, cramped apartment. The boy's chum successfully plays truant and in an hilarious sequence we see the escape one-by-one of a class being marched out to compulsory athletics, again, getting away with it as the hero seems never able to. Balanced against these efforts to escape are the classrooms, the queues, the locks and bars of prisons, all the *apparat* of social confinement. The boy suffers the ultimate confinement and escape: he runs away from the reform school and rushes to the sea he has always wanted to look upon. Yet, this, too, seems an edge, the final confinement, and he turns away from the sea to stare shoreward and enigmatically into the camera. In this last of a long series of regressions from city to country to primeval amniotic sea, the picture turns into a still as though the camera itself had given up motion. Truffaut's film has many virtues, but in the last analysis, it lapses into a mere case history, not a work of art. In the reform school the tone is shattered by a tactless interview with a psychiatrist straight out of the worst kind of social worker documentary and far too often, throughout the film, irrelevant episodes take over and warp its logical growth. Perhaps because the story is autobiographical, Truffaut seems unable to give his realistic material any shaping and form; he seems to have reached an extreme of vagueness that even *la nouvelle vague* can scarcely tolerate.

At the opposite extreme, that of fancy, stands Marcel Camus' *Black Orpheus,*[3] which took the Palme d'Or as well as the Oscar for best foreign-language film. Despite these endorsements, Camus has produced a marvellous movie. Most retellings of myths in modern dress turn out to be silly reductions (Jules Dassin's *He Who Must Die,* for example, shows the Passion as the sordid outcome of a romantic triangle between Christ, Judas, and Mary Magdalene). *Black Orpheus* could have turned out the same way with its "picturesque" setting among the Negro shacks in the steep bluffs above Rio and its cast of non-professional actors. Orpheus is a guitar-playing street-car conductor (does Camus mean that bards "transport" us?); Eurydice is a fey young thing from up-country, played by the only professional actress, Marpessa Dawn, who has come to the big city to escape the

[3] *Orfeu Negro:* directed by Marcel Camus; produced by Sasha Gordine; screenplay by Vinicius de Moraes; featuring as Eurydice, Marpessa Dawn; Orpheus, Breno Mello.

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attentions of a mysterious admirer. It is carnival time and she and Orpheus fall in love among the costumes and the tinsel. The admirer, whose face we never see but whose costume is Death's, a skeletal black and blue and white, pursues Eurydice through the Dionysiac madness of the carnival and finally drives her and Orpheus into a deserted trolley-barn where she is electrocuted in a spray of blue sparks. Orpheus searches for her body through various white hells, offices with their mounds of bureaucratic papers, the hospital, a grotesque white-gowned religious sect, the Macumba, finally the morgue where he finds her. Bearing her body to his shack in the bluffs, his cast-off mistress hurls stones at him and he falls over the precipice. A ten-year-old who worships him takes up his idol's guitar and "plays the sun up," as Orpheus used to do. The film closes with the wonderfully evocative image of children dancing by the precipice to the rising sun and the music of the new Orpheus.

"One of my themes," Camus has written, "was the denunciation of apathy," and it emerges most clearly in his use of colors. The sky colors, blue and white (also black), are the colors of lifelessness, the figure of Death, the dancers of Night, the fateful bandanna of Eurydice, the sterile white grocer and, indeed, most of the whites in the film, the bureaucracy, the stacks of government forms, the colors of morgue and hospital. Orange, green, gold, and the brown of the Negro skins, these are the colors of life, earth, and the sun. If this were all, however, Camus would simply have produced one more instance of a tired, Rousseauistic primitivism. The real strength of *Black Orpheus* lies in its use of the legend. Camus has not simply (and crudely) "re-enacted" the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. Rather, he has taken a simple love story and enriched it with not just the Orpheus myth but the savage's dance, the beat of steel drums, the rivalry between the Queen of the Day and the Queen of the Night (in the carnival dance contest), the death and rebirth of a solar god, the whole wild and wonderful myth of carnival. Camus seems to be saying we are all living in myth if we are free enough to see it—this is the real "apathy" the picture attacks, the failure to see the urgent significance of our daily joys; like Orpheus we, too, play our lives against the already-written stories of our deaths. We are all children dancing on the brink of a precipice.

Black Orpheus would seem to have traveled as far along that old mythic trail as *l.n.v.* can tolerate, but not so. The last and by my lights most successful of the four *l.n.v.* pictures around so far is equally mythy though far more realistic: *The Cousins.*[4] The good, square country cousin comes to stay with his gloriously dissolute city cousin (Chabrol's first film *Le Beau Serge* used a similar polarity but with the two actors and situations reversed). Both the cousins are supposedly study-

[4] *Les Cousins:* produced, written, and directed by Claude Chabrol; dialogue by Paul Gegauff; featuring as Paul, Jean-Claude Brialy; Charles, Gerard Blain; and Florence, Juliette Meyniel.

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ing for the bar exam, though only Charles the square does any studying; Paul lives his regular cool life of wine, women, song, and sportscars. Charles falls for Florence, a young lady of exceedingly doubtful if any virtue, whom he promptly idealizes; Paul, to save him, he says, from the heartache this affair would entail, seduces the girl and the three of them set up a *ménage à trois.* Patient Charles swots on, nibbling the French equivalent of No-Doz, while Paul plays away the time to the exam. And, naturally, Paul passes and Charles flunks. Utterly defeated, driven to the limits of his psyche, Charles loads one bullet in a gun, spins the chamber and pulls the trigger on his sleeping cousin. As usual, Paul wins. Later, as he is clowning, trying to cheer Charles up, Paul shoots his country cousin accidentally, and we are left wondering how he will bluff his way out of this one.

Taken so, the film is simply a pleasant bit of nihilism, in Aristotelian terms, the most thoroughly unsatisfactory kind of tragedy, "the good man passing from happiness to misery," "the bad man passing from misery to happiness." True, Chabrol is having some fun with the grand French tradition, the square being called Charles, sometimes Carolus, one of the fops Rameau, and Paul's parasite, Clovis. Indeed, one of the most decadent scenes opens with Clovis cheerfully banging a bust of Voltaire on the head. In a grand spoof of the usual nationalistic travelogue, Paul drives Charles around Paris, swerving his Austin-Healey all over the road to the accompaniment of rock-and-roll as they pass the edifices of French *gloire.* But Chabrol offers us far more than nihilism—he pulls a subtle moral switch. As we go through the film, we gradually realize that Charles, the country cousin, is an insufferable prig, unwilling to give himself even to his murderous hate. Five minutes inside his cousin's door, he is questioning the presence of Clovis ("He's older than we are"). His first gesture of friendship toward his fellow students is to point out to one who has just lost a finesse that he should have known the king was in the fourth hand. The only character Charles takes to is one Philippe who, jilted by his girl, follows her from place to place spewing forth venom, who says he will see them all burning in Hell (Charles and Philippe are the only ones who show symptoms of religion), and who finally throws himself out a window. Paul tries to get Philippe to ease up and take another girl, but Charles identifies with him and echoes and feeds his spite. When at a party Paul recites a German soldier's maudlin neo-Wagnerian apostrophes to *"Mutti,"* he does so in parody, but Charles' equally silly letters to *chère Maman* are in deadly if slushy earnest. And at the end, Charles turns on Florence with the same cruel words that the half-mad Philippe had used.

By contrast, Paul wounds no one, attempts no murders—everyone likes him, from his over-worked concierge to the students he kids (while Charles' fellow-students jeer at him after he fails the exam). Paul shows the *brio,* the grand hardness the heroes of Restoration comedy have. He takes the world as he finds it, enjoys it, scattering a largesse of pleas-

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ure to all who can stand it. While Charles is writing letters to *chère Maman,* Paul is arranging an abortion for last winter's *poule.* The girl, it turns out later, was just shaking him down, one more indication that Paul knows the world. He first looks at Charles through a telescope, staring down at him in a chieftain's robe and his exotic beard-and-moustache like an Averroes looking at some strange specimen. Paul's world ranges far; *libre* is the word constantly on the lips of his friends. At the party celebrating his passing the exam, a street entertainer bursts his chains to the sound of great crashing Wagnerian chords, while the camera circles slowly around Charles in his tiny room showing us visually how he has boxed himself in. In short, Charles cares much for *le droit;* Paul for *le bonheur.* Where Charles's is the virtue of sentiment, Paul's is the virtue of wisdom. At the end, after all his Wagnerian and Nazi shenanigans, we see in his book-lined room a bust of the sage of Weimar.

But this reading of the film (you might call it a *School for Scandal* reading, where the man of sentiment turns out to be a heel and the rake a right guy), this, too, is over-simple, because it forecloses the moral issue, albeit unconventionally. Chabrol's film resolutely leaves it open. His restless, circling, almost uncertain camera plays on his characters in ambiguous ways. We are never sure whether Paul is really a Nazi, whether his solicitude for his country cousin is real or a way of making fun of him, whether he seduces Florence to save Charles pain or simply because he wants her himself. In the last analysis, Chabrol has shown us only a series of Shem-and-Shaun polarities. Some are cultural: exotic, Dionysian Paul set off against the bourgeois and Apollonian Charles; one a creature of night, the other of day; one Germanophile, the other pure French provincial; one accompanied on the sound track by *Tristan,* the other by a sickeningly sweet country air. Another set of contrasts are psychological: Charles identifies himself with Maman, Paul with his rakish Uncle Henry, his *poules* and his *cornes.* As a result, the country cousin sees woman either as *la vierge* or *la putain* with no middle ground; the city cousin sees woman simply as means to his pleasure. Charles stands for repression; Paul for expression (or, in the latest term, neutralization). Charles is proudly masochistic throughout; Paul plays at sadism. The at times almost homosexual relation between the two suggests one side of the polarity between sadism and masochism, and Paul's inadvertently killing his cousin with the gun his cousin had loaded to shoot him makes almost an allegory of the classic way of masochism: outward aggression turned guiltily inward against the self. The strangest set of polarities, however, are the theological ones. Paul the hunter plays an accidental Cain to his cousin's bucolic Abel. The name Paul suggests the conversion, the moral switch, between the two. An Italian who crashes one of their parties calls himself the Archangel. Charles describes himself near the end as John the Baptist, and indeed Paul does represent a new order. We first see Paul serving bread and wine to Clovis (!), and Paul passes

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his bar exam by dazzling his interlocutors in the, as it were, synagogue. And in the final scene, Paul's bare feet beside the grotesque figure of the dead man for whom he will have to suffer provide us with the faintest echo of Christ. In all these polarities, Chabrol shows us what he takes to be the truth and leaves the goodness up to us.

It would be foolish to try to judge *la nouvelle vague* before all the films are in, but we can certainly rejoice right away for new men, new ideas, and new vigor among the celluloid shadows. Even so, there are limits to realism. Alexandre Astruc has written that the new directors are looking for "de-theatralization," showing characters without explaining them, turning the camera into an eye confused by the irrelevant and ignorant of the true facts as the eye is in life. Certainly that would be both new and vague, but would it be art? Films can get along with a lot or a little realism, but without a coherent concern with morality? Of these four films, all highly realistic, the three successful ones are carefully constructed on old fables much, much bothered about goodness. Freud is right about life, I suppose—but about the film? I wonder.

B. H. HAGGIN

Ballet and Music Chronicle

"THE TRUTH IS," an actor and director I know observed after one of Balanchine's ballets at New York's City Center a few years ago, "that what is significant in the theater today is being produced right here." The comment was a recognition of the feeling for the theater that is served by Balanchine's powers of choreographic invention—most obviously in works like *The Prodigal Son* and *Night Shadow,* and most recently in *The Figure in the Carpet,* with which the New York City Ballet, in its spring engagement, completed its activity of the year. Sponsored by the Shah of Iran in honor of the Fourth International Congress of Iranian Art and Archeology, the work had two preliminary scenes, "The Sands of the Desert" and "The Weaving of the Carpet," which led to "The Building of the Palace," the scene of a dazzling court spectacle in the form of a reception of foreign ambassadors by the Prince and Princess of Persia, with stunning scenery and costumes by Esteban Frances and richly varied invention by Balanchine to Handel's *Royal Fireworks* and *Water Music.* Handel's music has nothing to do with Iran, but it is superbly suited to Balanchine's invention for a court spectacle—ranging from the classical pas de trois of the Prince and Princesses of Lorraine, brilliantly executed by Ed-

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ward Villella with Susan Borree and Suki Schorer, through the noble intricate dance of the Spanish Duke and Duchess of Granada, elegantly executed by Judith Green and Francisco Moncion, the delicately amusing dance of the Chinese Duke and Duchess of L'an L'ing, delightfully executed by Patricia McBride and Nicholas Magallanes, to the grandly involved pas de deux of the Prince and Princess of Persia, impressively executed by Melissa Hayden and Jacques d'Amboise. And in the introductory scenes the music has as little to do with desert sands and the weaving of a Persian carpet as some of the classical ballet movements that Balanchine devised for them—e.g. the enchanting solo of Violette Verdy—but it goes perfectly with those movements.

The company's spring engagement opened with a new Balanchine pas de deux, to unfamiliar music by Tchaikovsky originally intended for *Swan Lake,* and with breathtakingly beautiful new details contrived for the exquisite style of Verdy. In it Conrad Ludlow exhibited not only his special and attractive warmth as a partner but a partially restored brilliance in his solo. But the company canceled its scheduled repetitions of *Theme and Variations,* the lovely classical ballet to Tchaikovsky's music of the same title that Balanchine made for Ballet Theater some years ago and introduced into the New York City Ballet's repertory at the end of this year's winter engagement, when it was danced with clarity and quiet brilliance by Verdy and the amazing Edward Villella.

At the Metropolitan in April Ballet Theater presented two new works. One was Birgit Cullberg's *Lady from the Sea,* another of her narrative ballets which again offered not a dance equivalent of the total substance of the Ibsen play but a danced and mimed narration of its bare plot in movements that alternated between the obvious and the desperately contrived, with no interest or value beyond the story they told, and sometimes not even that. The other was *Dialogues: Serenade for Seven,* an abstract classical ballet by Herbert Ross, who gave the company one striking piece, *Caprichos,* years ago but has disappointed resultant expectations ever since, and did so again this time with his strained-for and pointless ingenuities.

What promised to be a more important event than it turned out to be was the first American performance—by Thomas Scherman and his Little Orchestra Society—of Berlioz's last work, his opera *Beatrice and Benedict.* Only the overture is familiar from occasional performances and recordings; and it is a little masterpiece that created expectation of similar masterly writing throughout the work; but its delightful Allegretto scherzando section, repeated in the finale of the opera, and its Andante un poco sostenuto section, repeated in Beatrice's aria *"Il me souvient le jour du départ,"* turned out to be the only notable achievements of the score. For the rest one heard again what one had heard much of the time in *The Trojans*—a routine and bland vocal writing against a background of orchestral writing in which the Ber-

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lioz mind operated more actively and interestingly. In the performance there was excellent singing by Irene Jordan as Beatrice, Adele Addison as Hero and Michel Sénéchal as Benedict, and fine work by the orchestra and William Jonson's Choral Art Society.

The American Opera Society ended its season with a repetition of Poulenc's early *Les Mamelles de Tirésias,* which it had given in 1957, and a first performance of his recent *La Voix Humaine.* The music in popular styles which carried the buffooneries of *Les Mamelles* was engaging; and the staging—with an amusing little set and costumes designed by Richard G. Mason—made it enjoyable even to someone who couldn't follow every word of the French text, which was sung charmingly by Mme. Denise Deval, Martial Singher and the other members of the cast under the expert direction of Georges Prêtre. But the forty-five minutes of fragments of recitative and arioso in which the single character of *La Voix Humaine,* a woman at one end of a telephone line, tries desperately and unsuccessfully to hold on to her lover at the other end, constituted a tour de force for the one singer, Mme. Deval, whose considerable powers didn't keep it from becoming boring after the first few minutes.

The New York City Opera Company, in its third season of American opera, again ignored distinguished achievement in American opera and added Marc Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock* and Menotti's *The Consul* to its undistinguished repertory. The intellectual level of *The Cradle Will Rock* is indicated in the episode in which Mrs. Mister, the wife of the owner of the steel company, bustles in to tell the minister, the Reverend Salvation, that her husband has told the President the company must have war for its profits and the President has obeyed his orders, after which she gives the Reverend Salvation a roll of bills, and he steps into the pulpit and preaches a war sermon. To call this dated today is to imply that it was valid in 1937; whereas actually it was in 1937, as it is now, the crudest agit-prop falsification suited to an audience of readers of the *Daily Worker;* and one must be depressed when a work that one would expect to be revolting to a supposedly more normally intelligent audience is laughed with and applauded instead. I have been speaking of the libretto because *The Cradle Will Rock* is not a work like *Rigoletto* or *Il Trovatore,* whose absurd libretto is something to ignore or endure for the superb music. To Blitzstein and his public the libretto of *The Cradle* is primary; and to me the music is rubbish. And I would like to believe that what Franchot Tone applauded, the night I was there, was only the excellent performance that wasted the talents of Tammy Grimes, Ruth Kobart, David Atkinson and the rest.

Beethoven's *Fidelio* has not achieved in this country the place in the standard repertory that it has in Central Europe; and this may be because the American public—told repeatedly that the work is one of Beethoven's failures—has been prevented by this preconception from hearing for itself the expressiveness, dramatic force and spiritual eleva-

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tion of some of the greatest dramatic music outside of Mozart's operas, ranging from the charming opening duet through things like the wonderful quartet *"Mir ist so wunderbar,"* Leonore's *"Abscheulicher!"* recitative and *"Komm' Hoffnung"* aria, her poignant duet with Rocco, the powerful introduction to the dungeon scene and Florestan's *"Gott! welch' Dunkel hier!,"* the duet, trio and quartet that follow, to the sublime *"O Gott! welch' ein Augenblick"* at the end. And a public taught to regard the staggering piling up of *Leitmotiven* at the end of Wagner's *Die Götterdämmerung* as the highest development of operatic method may not be capable of appreciating climactic sublimities like the *"Contessa, perdono"* passage at the end of Mozart's *Figaro* or *"Gott! welch' ein Augenblick"* at the end of *Fidelio.*

This being so, *Fidelio* should be presented to the American public only with a cast that can give it maximum effect; and the Metropolitan's new production had a tenor, Jon Vickers, whose vocal splendor and expressive intensity made his performance of Florestan's recitative and aria the most tremendous that I recall ever hearing; it offered in addition excellent singers in other roles—Hermann Uhde as Don Pizarro, Deszo Ernster as Rocco, Laurel Hurley as Marzelline, William Wildermann as Don Fernando; but in the central role of Leonore it offered, at most performances, a singer who lacked the necessary power of vocal style and dramatic presence and projection, Aase Nordmo Loevberg. Nor was there in the performance conducted by Karl Böhm any of the strength and tension of Toscanini's recorded performance. The new sets designed by Horace Armistead were serviceable without being in any way distinguished; the stage direction of Herbert Graf was efficient.

The fact that the revised *Simon Boccanegra* of Verdi produced by the Metropolitan employed his fully matured powers of the period between *Aida* and *Otello* has caused some to hear in it a work of the same quality and magnitude as those two. But what is evident in the revised details of harmony, texture and orchestration is only accomplished technique; and what is absent is the inspiration that achieved the incandescent invention of *Otello;* so that I found most of *Simon* boring. Frederick Fox's most impressive sets were the sumptuous ones of the rooms in the Doge's palace (one noted in the final scene a chair prominently placed where it had not been in the same room in the preceding scene); Motley contributed rich costumes; Margaret Webster's staging was effective; Mitropoulos's shaping of the score was powerful; and though the performance I attended was blighted by Zinka Milanov's unlovely, wobbly, not-always-on-pitch singing, it had more respectable and adequate singing by the other principals: Frank Guarrera as Simon, Giorgio Tozzi—the velvet gone from his beautiful voice—as Fiesco, Carlo Bergonzi as Gabriele Adorno, Ezio Flagello as Paolo.

Attending a performance of *Don Giovanni* to see and hear how this

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production—one of the most distinguished in the Metropolitan's history —was standing the passage of time, I found Eugene Berman's scenery and costumes to be as overwhelmingly beautiful as I had remembered them to be, and Herbert Graf's deployment of the action on the various stage areas and levels skillful but flawed, as it was two years ago. Cyril Ritchard is not the only one with the erroneous idea that something must be going on at every moment in an opera, including the expansive lyrical moments when attention should be claimed only by what is going on in the music: in one such moment of *Don Giovanni,* the quartet *"Non ti fidar",* the attention concentrated on what was being sung by the four principals was annoyingly distracted by the entrance, in the background, of two peasant women whom Dr. Graf had examine the contents of each other's basket, and a water-carrier whom Dr. Graf had fill his pails at a well. And this time Leporello again sang *"Ah pietà, signori miei"* to characters who paid no attention to him and therefore had no reason to exclaim over his sudden disappearance. This time, moreover, there was an additional piece of business that made no sense: when Don Giovanni and Leporello caught sight of Donna Elvira singing her first aria, Leporello began to search for her name in his catalogue, whereas the dramatic situation is that the two men have not recognized Elvira and therefore do not know her name and therefore cannot look for it in the catalogue. The musical performance, in the absence of Böhm, was conducted by an assistant conductor, Martin Rich, who paced the work well but was unable to get the singers to fit their phrases exactly into the orchestral framework. As for the singers, they included Jerome Hines, who sang beautifully but was an affable Don Giovanni without the compelling and sinister masculine attractiveness the role calls for; Eleanor Steber, who was in excellent voice and dominated the performance with the beauty and style of her singing of Donna Anna; Lucine Amara, the first sound of whose harshly metallic voice, in her singing of Donna Elvira, was an unpleasant shock; Roberta Peters, whose singing of Zerlina I found not agreeable to the ear; Jan Peerce, looking a little ridiculous but singing Don Ottavio well; Ezio Flagello, a good Leporello; William Wildermann, a good Commendatore; and Theodor Uppman, throwing himself about too much but singing well as Masetto.

The arrestingly individual Glenn Gould, who was to have played Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4 with the Philadelphia Orchestra, was compelled to withdraw by an injury to his arm; and so I heard an unarrestingly routine performance of the concerto by Eugene Istomin, but also heard the orchestra for the first time in enough years to be dumbfounded by the unbelievable sensitiveness of its execution and beauty of its tone. The use of this orchestra by Eugene Ormandy, however, was less impressive: his hands, all evening—in works of Johann Christian Bach, Strauss, Milhaud and Beethoven—made little curves

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and big curves; and little curves and big curves of sound were what the orchestra produced in all the music.

A concert by the Cleveland Orchestra under George Szell revealed this as another great American orchestra; Leon Fleisher's playing in Mozart's Piano Concerto K.503—with the clear articulation and outlining of phrase and the continuity of tension that Schnabel's playing had, but with the greater strength and projective force that the work calls for—revealed him as one of the great pianists and musicians of today; and George Rochberg's Symphony No. 2 left me with the impression that the serial technique he uses is a way of filling pages with black spots but not, as Mr. Rochberg believes, a way of producing music that is an expressive communication.

The larger and more important part of Leonard Bernstein's book *The Joy of Music*[1] is a group of the *Omnibus* television talks that gave him the prominence and the audience eager to follow him into Carnegie Hall that in turn brought him the musical directorship of the New York Philharmonic, some of whose concerts he has felt impelled to transform into approximations of the television talks. And the first thing to note is that the printed words haven't the impact of the words spoken by the engaging television personality. Also, and more important, it is one thing for Bernstein, in illustration of his spoken words, to offer the actual and accurate sounds of passages of jazz or of Schönberg's String Quartet Op. 30 No. 3 and *Pierrot Lunaire* and Berg's *Lyric Suite* played by living musicians, and another thing for Bernstein, in illustration of his printed words, to depend on the reader's own realization on piano and in *Sprechstimme* of the printed musical notation of the passages: in the one case the listener heard the passages; in the other the reader will hear something very different from the passages.

But even when the millions of listeners heard the actual sounds of the passage from Schönberg's quartet—to leave the book and go back to the television talk—and were asked "Can you see that this had to be the next step after *Verklärte Nacht*?" I doubt that very many of them *could,* and really did, hear what Schönberg heard and Bernstein hears but most people do not hear—that these atonal sounds had to be the next step after the tonal ones of *Verklärte Nacht;* though I can believe that many of the television listeners were magnetized into accepting Bernstein's contention as true without being able to hear its truth themselves. And so with Bernstein's general contention in this talk—that once he had explained how the modern music they disliked had come about, his television listeners would hear that "modern music is your music" and find it a "miracle that we, now in the sixth decade of the twentieth century, have so much beauty in our music." What I am illustrating with this instance is my contention that in Bernstein's television talks his engaging personality got many people to believe they

[1] THE JOY OF MUSIC, by *Leonard Bernstein.* Simon and Schuster. $5.95.

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understood or learned something they didn't really understand or learn at all, and to accept as true certain positions and ideas that were questionable.

There are other instances—among them the talk on Bach, with its contention that when Bernstein had explained the technical procedures, the preoccupation with mystic numbers, the musical pictorialism in exciting passages of the St. Matthew Passion, he had explained what produced equally exciting music in all the "suites, partitas, sonatas, toccatas, preludes, fugues, cantatas, oratorios, masses, passions, fantasias, concertos, chorales, variations, motets, passacaglias—the white-hot creation" of a man for whom "all music was religion; writing it was an act of faith; and performing it was an act of worship"—whereas in fact Bernstein had explained what on occasion produced deadly dull music in all those categories by a man for whom the writing of music seems at times to have been only the routine exercise of his craftsmanship. Or the talk on the American musical, with its contention that the musical is on the verge of giving us our truly American opera—in disregard of the basic and irreconcilable expressive differences in the musical idioms of the musical and opera. Or the talk on jazz, in which Bernstein's explanation of syncopation was concerned with the crude shifting of accents from strong to weak beats and not with the subtle thing one hears in jazz—what Wilder Hobson, in his *American Jazz Music,* described so well as the tension- and momentum-producing suspended rhythms created around the regular beats by players who have a feeling for these suspended rhythms and in whose playing they are a fluent principle; and in which Bernstein's demonstration of a jazz scale with flatted "blue" notes caused a jazz player I know to object that the flatting was a momentary and subtle modification of the notes of the *normal* scale, dictated by the course of the player's melodic invention, and done again by players who had a feeling for such flatting and in whose playing it was a fluent principle.

But if I must point out these things I must also say that much of the detail of the talks on Bach and the American musical was excellent, and that the talk "What Makes Opera Grand," a demonstration of the articulation of drama by music, was mostly admirable. I only wish Bernstein had used a better work than *La Bohème* as his illustration; and regret the inexplicable omission from the book of the important point Bernstein made in the talk with the finale of *Tristan und Isolde* —that "we really don't have to understand every word that Isolde sings in order to feel the sublime exaltation of her love. You don't have to know that she is saying: *'Soll ich schlürfen, untertauchen,/ Süss in Düften mich verhauchen.'* " We don't, in other words, have to have opera sung in English.

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LOUIS SIMPSON

A Garland for the Muse

IT IS TIME FOR THE ANTI-PLATO TO APPEAR, the philosopher of the Absolutely Bad. If there are still works of art suspended above the earth—paintings not yet realized; sonatas, like Vinteuil's, that tease the listener with a promise of eternal beauty—there are also, somewhere beneath the earth, works of a badness that has not yet been realized, and these works also have their midwives, minds prevented only by a shadowing of intelligence and education from perfecting the masterpieces of dullness, misshapenness and folly that lurk in the Absolute. But they try, they try, and in front of me I have sixteen books of verse that are, if not the thing itself, certainly working drafts of incoherence. In the upside-down cave of the anti-Plato, these ideas also cast a light; they show us what to avoid. We must be grateful for bad books, and to their creators. These poems will not have to be written again; these bats are in other people's belfries.

Here is the de luxe edition by the master of the Low Tide School of Verse (all about clams and driftwood on the Maine Coast in October); the new and less convincing version of the New Testament by Brother Rhinoceros; the collages of malice and obscenity by another disappointed man (they are all gone into the world of light, and he alone sits ling'ring here); the collected poems of the selected friend of a major critic; the poems dated at Fiesole, and Rapallo, and Taormina (postcards, Cecil, are not poems); an epic of the Snake Indians by an octogenarian, with a preface attacking the obscurantism of modern verse, by which he means *The Waste Land;* and the poem, no shorter than fifty lines and no longer than ten thousand, celebrating the discovery of oil in Oklahoma, which has been awarded a prize of five thousand dollars by the Oilwomen's League for the Perpetration of Culture. These works will have their meed of praise in *Time* and the *Times* and the *Saturday Review;* I will therefore discuss four books of another kind, which have been mixed in with the lot, seemingly by accident.[1]

The first is J. V. Cunningham's *The Exclusions of a Rhyme.* There are not so many serious poets in America that we can afford to neglect the collected poems of a talent like this, yet I am afraid that present

1 THE EXCLUSIONS OF A RHYME, by *J. V. Cunningham.* Alan Swallow. $3.00. CYPRESS AND ACACIA, by *Vernon Watkins.* New Directions. $3.50. WITH EYES AT THE BACK OF OUR HEADS, by *Denise Levertov.* New Directions. $3.50. BONE THOUGHTS, by *George Starbuck.* Yale University Press. $3.00.

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neglect is what Mr. Cunningham must have— and, to some extent, he has courted it. By reaction, it appears, he has particularly cultivated just those qualities that are likely to repel the publicists of the age. I sympathize with his attitude, for there is no general public worth having, yet I regret that his attitude has constricted his poetry; it is too much in reaction. But before I go into this, I would like to show his advantages.

First, he is a master, in his way. His tight, short, rhymed lines could hardly be improved. They have, as he writes:

> The classic indignation,
> The sullen clarity
> Of passions in their station,
> Moved by propriety.

A further concentration produces this:

> You wonder why *Drab* sells her love for gold?
> To have the means to buy it when she's old.

The word, of course, is *hard*. The forms and tone of Mr. Cunningham's verse are neo-classic; as far as his style goes, no poet since Swift need have written, and the vernacular does not exist. Exclusions with a vengeance! Now and then an image is admitted, as in "The Dog-Days":

> Nothing alive will stir for hours,
> Dispassion will leave love unsaid,
> While through the window masked with flowers
> A lone wasp staggers from the dead.
>
> Watch now, bereft of coming days,
> The Wasp in the darkened chamber fly,
> Whirring ever in an airy maze,
> Lost in the light he entered by.

But there are entire poems which contain no image; they are written as *sententiae*. What are they about? The discipline of the will . . . love, pride, anger . . . the work of art. Dispassion and diffidence are key words. His poems are demonstrations of ideas, and are themselves the ideas they demonstrate. Moreover, there is much grace in his method, and those who have an ear for verse will enjoy his poems for that reason alone. It is odd to have to praise a poet for being talented as a writer, but nowadays when every other botched novelist, peevish Ph. D. candidate or rabbit-spirited junky sets down the wanderings of his brain in separate lines and calls it verse, it seems necessary to remark that the ability to write poetry is a rare gift, as rare as the talent of a first-rate violinist, and not to be simulated by mere energy or mere intelligence. This is a dismaying truth to some, and the reason that verse is often distrusted and sometimes hated. Nothing infuriates medi-

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ocrity so much as talent. Besides, it is profoundly unconventional to spend time perfecting the form and meaning of words, in a society increasingly run by ad-men. I hope you will not think I am just being paradoxical if I say that Mr. Cunningham's poetry is revolutionary—for what is revolution but opposition to the *status quo*? And it is the eccentricity of such minds, expending themselves in a search for perfection, that will save us at last, if we are to be saved.

Yes, I admire Mr. Cunningham, as you see, and I am glad that there is one of him in America. But there are other ways of poetry which, I am afraid, Mr. Cunningham would exclude, and this brings me to my main criticism of his verse. It is simply that you cannot show the triumph of discipline over disorder unless you also show the disorder. You cannot produce *Lear* without the storm scene, nor bring Oedipus to Colonus without passing through Thebes. The poet must always fear his own wisdom, the self-examination which says, Why write anything at all? Is not the perfection of understanding perfect silence? Is not the best poem a blank page? When one comes to this resignation, one is abnegating the task that poets, if not philosophers, have, which is to translate the world. The task was not beneath Shakespeare, nor Dante, nor Sophocles; they did not merely give you the epilogue; they also made you see and feel their experience, and so you were able to participate in their wisdom. You had earned the right to be resigned. But Mr. Cunningham's poems do not often give you the opportunity to earn that right. You may see how he justifies himself in the poem, and yet have no joy in it.

Again—can you turn your back so entirely on the language of your own time and place, neglect the traditions of your own country, without marring your perceptions? In his adherence to English traditions of verse, Mr. Cunningham is excluding—of course, deliberately—all that is specifically American, the traditions of Twain and Whitman and Hart Crane, for example. I wonder if this is not a serious error. For can you really revive antique ways of thought? Can an American writing like a sixteenth or eighteenth century Englishman avoid seeming to be only an American *et cetera*? Poetry is not all a matter of idea and technique; it is also in the air we breathe. I miss in Mr. Cunningham's poetry a local habitation and a name. Sometimes, when Americans try to be like Europeans, their native twang creeps in willy-nilly, producing a slightly ludicrous juxtaposition; or their precision reveals their discomfort. I find it difficult to imagine any Englishman's verse being quite as impeccably formal as Mr. Cunningham's. He has an excruciated sense of poetic manners. But here I find my argument turning against itself, for no one is as pure as the American. No Englishman was ever as proper as Henry James; and Mr. Cunningham, in the excess of his severity, is our old friend the American Puritan.

And like the Puritan he has a sardonic side. The poems, and more strikingly the epigrams, exhibit a standard, old-fashioned way of treating love and lust. It is in these places particularly that I feel the de-

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ficiency of the neo-classic, or neo-classic-Puritan, way of dealing with experience. Why is it that triumphs of the will, so often, seem to induce despondency—at least in the spectator? I would like these poems better if I felt that fun had been had, at some point, by somebody. Looking back at love, or looking at it from the outside, no doubt there is little to be said for it. The postures, as Chesterfield remarked, are ridiculous, and you cannot argue reasonably for an action that requires, for its consummation, a loss of control. But if you are involved in it, that is another matter. The art of reason also has its inadequacies, and the Romantics, who tried to recreate and heighten experience in their poems, though they might arrive at no explicit conclusion, were not so foolish after all. They made you see again that the world is a delightful place, that the whole is more interesting than the sum of its parts. The pleasures of the reasonable man are always such a little thing—pipe-smoking, or sipping wine, or handling first editions. If I were the friend addressed by Mr. Cunningham in his poem, "To a Friend, on Her Examination for the Doctorate in English":

> . . . What have you gained?
> A learned grace
> And lines of knowledge on the face,
> A spirit weary but composed
> By true perceptions well-disposed,
> A soft voice and historic phrase
> Sounding the speech of Tudor days,
> What ignorance cannot assail
> Or daily novelty amaze,
> Knowledge enforced by firm detail.

if I were that friend, I'd go out and get drunk! So much trouble, and such small satisfaction!

In putting down some of the matters that the poems brought to my mind, I have hardly done justice to Mr. Cunningham's. I will end, therefore, by letting one of his poems, in its entirety, speak for itself:

Envoi

> Hear me, whom I betrayed
> While in this spell I stayed,
> Anger, cathartic aid,
> Hear and approve my song!
>
> See from this sheltered cove
> The symbol of my spell
> Calm for adventure move,
> Wild in repose of love,
> Sea-going on a shell
> In a moist dream. How long—
> Time to which years are vain—

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I on this coastal plain,
Rain and rank weed, raw air,
Served that fey despair,
Far from the lands I knew!

Winds of my country blew
Not with such motion—keen,
Stinging, and I as lean,
Savage, direct, and bitten,
Not pitying and unclean.

Anger, my ode is written.

As Blake said to the Angel, we impose on one another; poets are always engaged in a bitter struggle to found new states and draw new frontiers. Yet, certain poets avoid the struggle—at least in this world. They say, as did Wordsworth, that they must first be loved, before they can seem worthy to be loved; or like Rilke, that there is no defense but defenselessness. Vernon Watkins, the poet of *Cypress and Acacia,* also stands apart and requires a special approach; to like his poems one must put theory aside, for the time being. Mr. Watkins' poetry is not a kind that immediately appeals to me. I am naturally suspicious of grandeur. Had I been present at Duino when Rilke was having his visitations, had I seen *The Prelude* in manuscript, had I been at the first reading of *Genesis,* I would have fidgeted. These works demand that we surrender ourselves to a vision. Yet, though I have resisted, I have come to feel that parts of Mr. Watkins' book are the real thing. "Ode at the Spring Equinox," to begin near the end, which is where I begin new books, seems as large, profound, and grandly moving a poem as any I have read in years. Welsh farms with hay-ricks, and constellated skies, are not the natural settings of my fantasies, for like so many others I was educated poetically in the backstreets, and am only now beginning to be able to look at a leaf without suspecting its motives. But Mr. Watkins' vision is compelling:

How full the clustered sky!
Beyond the uncounted crop
Of stars I still descry
Where the white millstream runs
Glittering in ghostly race
New multitude of suns,
While here galactic space
Hangs, like a frozen drop.

That stanza is from "Bread and the Stars," and this is from a poem simply titled "Ode":

Truth is simple: out of the mouth of babes
Flows the living word to correct the proud.

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All great acts are serene and
Born in the bands of acknowledged glory.

And why not? After the forty-year fidgets of modern verse, for God's sake, why not? If we could only keep some of the gains of those forty years—for example, the hardness and particularity of language—and yet not be ashamed to speak of the universe as though it mattered to us personally!

Mr. Watkins is so innocent of fashion that he is able to write about Guinevere of Camelot; the names, Daedalus, Christ, Chaucer, Keats, appear in his poems. These are not decorations, but properties; not culture as it is understood in the provinces, but a life he was born into. I don't know where to find fault with Mr. Watkins; I can only regret that, to American verse, he brings little help. For here are the standard British infantry drill and cavalry tactics (stanzas right!), while we are involved in fierce skirmishes of irregulars in the Wilderness, and are threatened by an invasion of surrealists from below the Rio Grande.

Returning to the "Ode at the Spring Equinox"—this magnificent poem, in stanzas of sixteen rhymed lines that contract and expand like some creature in the scene, describes a rocky shore swept by ravens, and warns against the peril of annihilation by man's ignorance and cruelty. The struggle of the ravens with the wind, poetry itself, is in danger:

All is so hung that harmony,
Though pitched precariously,
Conquers uncertainty, remorse
And every flickering shaft of doubt
When the pure gift flies out
And wonder, like a spring, renews its force.

Mr. Watkins' grandeur, though not often pegged down to familiar details, always centers on some powerful metaphor; and so, though the reader may not find his ideas particularly sympathetic, yet he is compelled to admire the view; and he may even be induced by the strong, melodic form of the poem to share the poet's mood.

Denise Levertov's *With Eyes at the Back of Our Heads* is a very real book; the poems are carefully worked, and each has moments of perception. Miss Levertov's mind is curious; it delights in itself—a little too much for my taste, but not perhaps for that of others. She cultivates a stillness in which any freak of sight, sound, touch, may suggest its meaning. Her poems are all in "free" form, depending for their effect upon your willingness to let your mind go straying with hers. There is always an assumption that what comes into her mind is important, a total seriousness of self-examination, warmed here and there by a surrender of affection toward some object vividly glimpsed, or more rarely toward a human situation. Hers is essentially a poetry of meditation, a little static in its descriptiveness; but if one has to choose between extremes, the inward-turning poem has possibilities, while the poem that is all action

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and surface ends by disgusting you with the whole fiddling process. Of the several good poems in the book I prefer "February Evening in New York." At one point the poem seems to lose control in an outpouring of sympathy; the dramatization, rare in Miss Levertov's work, gives the description significance:

> As the lights brighten, as the sky darkens,
> a woman with crooked heels says to another woman
> while they step along at a fair pace,
> *"You know, I'm telling you, what I love best*
> *is life. I love life! Even if I ever get*
> *to be old and wheezy— or limp! You know?*
> *Limping along?—I'd still . . ."* Out of hearing.
> To the multiple disordered tones
> of gears shifting, a dance
> to the compass points, out, four-way river . . . .

Miss Levertov's casual phrasing permits much of natural and domestic life, lilies and paper bags, to appear without embarrassment; she gets her more exotic effects not by using rhetoric but by placing you in an out-of-the-way corner of the world, or her mind—for example, the apparently Mexican scenes of "Triple Feature" and "Xochipilli." Her adaptation of Gautier's famous poem:

> The best work is made
> from hard, strong materials,
> obstinately precise—
> the line of the poem, onyx, steel.

shows that there is nothing accidental about her method, and suggests a determination that, if the range of her interests can be expanded, may produce a body of first-rate work.

". . . if 'War Story' and the other rimed poems in this manner are 'light verse,' they are also an intense and shaking kind of poetry. . . ." Thus Mr. Dudley Fitts, in his introduction to George Starbuck's *Bone Thoughts.* Mr. Fitts is easily shaken. There are good things to be said for Mr. Starbuck's verse, but that it is very moving is not one of them. Such matters may often be a question of taste, but the lilting sarcasm of 'War Story' is not in the same class as the anguish of Wilfred Owen's poems, for example, and it is no use talking as if it were. Mr. Starbuck is clever, and dexterous with rhyme, and he converses freely:

> Saved from Mao and Molotov,
> millions leave the clinic of
> Doctor Dulles, Doctor Nixon,
> rabid with their antitoxin.

Did I say he was dexterous with rhyme? Not always. The second couplet, above, is slipshod, and this kind of thing has to be done perfectly.

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My objection to Mr. Starbuck is that sometimes he swarms all over with words—precise words, nuggets of imagery, but just too many of them; if he doesn't hit the target, he splatters it. I find this particularly true of his "Poems from a First Year in Boston":

> Nor would you sell us
> that Freedom-to-end-Freedoms that the self-sold
> crow about: Freedom from Guilt, they name it, shiftless
> for any other shrift. Yachtsmen, their footloose
> legatees fitting reefers into faultless
> features with febrile wrists, protest: some leftist
> restlessness threatens them in brittle leaflets. . . .

On the good side, his pyrotechnics are frequently surprising, and Mr. Starbuck is a true poet by the Auden Test (if he's interested in what can be done with words, he's a poet; if he only wants to say something important, he's not). "Diabolist" is Mr. Starbuck at his best:

> Through water his own waterfall
> furthering, the electric eel
> loops downward into a drowned pool
> of himself. Snowfall and storm coil
> to the same fold, invisible
> as sleep. He is their shepherd. Whole
>
> oceans above him turn and spool
> silver from valleys. A slow wheel
> tears you from me, Love—beautiful
> as the sea. And when your eyes, all
> depth and breadth of the world we fell,
> brim, do I flicker there like coal?

This is intelligence, and intense seeing, and an extraordinary power of the poet to immerse himself in the subject. The vein, though less dazzling than that which Mr. Starbuck mines in his topical verse, goes deep, and will be more rewarding in the long run.

I had completed this review when I received Anne Sexton's *To Bedlam and Part Way Back*.[2] For once the blurbs don't lie. The book is an experience—original, moving, and delightful. Above all, delightful—for though Mrs. Sexton's poems sometimes deal with Bedlam, that is, scenes in a mental hospital, and often with anguish, yet the mind at work is so keen and the technique is so excellent that her book is an uninterrupted joy. It is a *book,* as so few collections of verse are, everywhere infused with the character of the author. From the jacket I learn that she has been writing poems for only three years. This then

[2] TO BEDLAM AND PART WAY BACK, by *Anne Sexton*. Houghton Mifflin. $3.00.

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is a phenomenon, like Rimbaud, to remind us, when we have forgotten in the weariness of literature, that poetry can happen.

The poems are lyrical structures; the movement of the lines and the ease of rhyme provide an impetus, an aesthetic pleasure, that balances the almost, at times, intolerable reality she deals with. But the more poetry succeeds, the less it can be described; here then is the poem titled "Her Kind":

> I have gone out, a possessed witch,
> haunting the black air, braver at night;
> dreaming evil, I have done my hitch
> over the plain houses, light by light:
> lonely thing, twelve-fingered, out of mind.
> A woman like that is not a woman, quite.
> I have been her kind.
>
> I have found the warm caves in the woods,
> filled them with skillets, carvings, shelves,
> closets, silks, innumerable goods;
> fixed the suppers for the worms and the elves:
> whining, rearranging the disaligned.
> A woman like that is misunderstood.
> I have been her kind.
>
> I have ridden in your cart, driver,
> waved my nude arms at villages going by,
> learning the last bright routes, survivor
> where your flames still bite my thigh
> and my ribs crack where your wheels wind.
> A woman like that is not ashamed to die.
> I have been her kind.

Mrs. Sexton has an eye for ordinary life too, like W. D. Snodgrass, whose *Heart's Needle* was so welcome last year. For example, there is a description in her "Funnel" of a house in Maine that seems like all the old seaside houses that ever were:

> It is rented cheap in the summer musted air
> to sneaker-footed families who pad through
> its rooms and sometimes finger the yellow keys
> of an old piano that wheezes bells of mildew.

Yet this descriptive gift does not restrict her imagination. I have read many descriptions of war, yet have seen none truer than this:

> This was the first beach of assault;
> the odor of death hung in the air
> like rotting potatoes; the junkyard
> of landing craft waited open and rusting.

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The bodies were strung out as if they were
still reaching for each other . . .

The point is, her poetry is much more than a recreation of facts, though apparently it draws largely on experience; it is a power of imagination also. Maybe Mrs. Sexton really *is* a witch. And this imaginative power can be sustained over long stretches, as in her story of a woman who, in 1890, traveled in Europe, and was loved by a man who was already married, and returned to wither in New England—ending with these extraordinary strokes of fiction:

I tell you, you will come
here, to the suburbs of Boston, to see the blue-nose
world go drunk each night, to see the handsome
children jitterbug, to feel your left ear close
one Friday at Symphony. And I tell you,
you will tip your boot feet out of that hall,
rocking from its sour sound, out onto
the crowded street, letting your spectacles fall
and your hair net tangle as you stop passers-by
to mumble your guilty love while your ears die.

I won't try to predict Mrs. Sexton's future. There is always an air of apology in the forecasts with which reviewers are so free. But she has a present, and it is great.

G. E. DIMOCK, JR.

The Iliad Rescued: or a Mustache for Mona Lisa

ROBERT GRAVES HAS TRIED to rescue the *Iliad* from the "classroom curse," which, he says, has lain on it for twenty-six centuries, by making it into a satire, written largely in prose, but with invocation, prayers, similes, and so on done into verse.[1] This is no doubt a right and proper thing for a bard to do—to take a traditional story and recast it according to the bard's own views of human experience and ideas of literary form. Homer no doubt did as much. But unlike Homer, Graves is not quite willing to stand independent of the name and fame of his predecessor.

[1] THE ANGER OF ACHILLES: HOMER'S *ILIAD*, translated by *Robert Graves*. Illustrated by *Ronald Searle*. Doubleday. $4.95.

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"Homer's *Iliad,* translated by . . . ," appears on the jacket—in smallish print to be sure, but it appears.

Graves therefore argues in his introduction that the *Iliad* itself was a satire. The reason no one has realized this for so long is said to be that the Athenian tyrant Peisistratus reconstituted the *Iliad* as a sort of Bible, to the greater glory of Ionian kings; and to explain how he could use a satire on the ancestors of Ionian kings for such a purpose, Graves seems to argue, though this is obscure, that Homer was actually satirizing, under the names of Agamemnon, Achilles, and so on, the contemporary "Dorian" ruling aristocracy. Therefore the satire had to be straight-faced—Homer was "walking on a razor's edge"—and the poem had to be ambiguous enough to convince any given Dorian chieftain that his values were being upheld rather than traduced. Thus it was also ambiguous enough for Peisistratus' purposes—to make Athenian schoolboys and grown men think that kings and tyrants, especially the house of Nestor, Peisistratus' ancestor, and Ionian hegemony, were all worth dying for—whereas really these things were being held up to ridicule, particularly the dying for anything, all the time. This is of course an impossible theory. If anything is certain about the composition of the *Iliad* it is that it was composed out of reach of Dorian chiefs, whether in Ionia, Aeolis, or Athens. But assume that Homer sang in Dorian chiefs' halls (and this is the only theory that will account for the inscrutability of the satire): who would be present to enjoy the satire except the poet himself and possibly the servants? Nor is the role of Peisistratus credible. According to Graves, p. 16, Peisistratus supported the *Iliad* because it glorified Nestor, yet on p. 21 Graves calls Nestor "Homer's favorite butt after Agamemnon." Nor will the hint help that Peisistratus revised the text so that it should seem to glorify Nestor. Not only does this remove Peisistratus' reason for choosing the *Iliad* in the first place, but it is Peisistratus' revised text which Graves in fact translates, instead of reconstructing the original satiric version. Peisistratus' purposes can only be served if no one gets the joke —and no one has, until Graves. This seems to be another of those cases where everyone has been fooled except our translator.

Though absolutely incredible, Graves' theory has the advantage of solving the problem of how to make the *Iliad* palatable to a modern audience. He is now free, with no Dorian chiefs or Peisistratids listening, to bring out "all the rich humor lacking in the usual solemn, pedantic versions of the *Iliad*" (jacket); in other words, he is free to kid the *Iliad* in the process of translating it. This should suit the audience he apparently has in mind; those who, told all their lives that the *Iliad* is a great literary monument, have been unable to find in it anything but some very odd behavior presented in a very odd style, boring when it is not ridiculous. Now they are told that it was meant to be ridiculous, so they were right the whole time, and that a lot of it *is* boring, but Graves will fix that up. The result is that this audience can at last enjoy, with a full sense of justification, not only the various

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divertissements Graves has provided, and not only the extremely funny —and savage—illustrations by Ronald Searle, but above all the spectacle of that Thing that tortured them in school or college having its nose tweaked in just the way they would have liked to tweak it. Then, when they get to the end of the book, they can pat themselves on the back with the thought that they have read a major classic.

Whether the nose-tweaking, plus the other advantages enumerated, will be enough to hold you for 344 pages probably depends on how much you hate Authority, but the point is that the result is pretty poor satire. Graves goes through the poem, making everything as ridiculous as he can while still preserving some show of translating the Greek. The result is that chunks of the original show through which are in violent contrast with the naughty bits. This incongruity itself may seem funny for a few pages, but one is soon left utterly confused as to who is being satirized, or for what. The only way to demonstrate this is to offer an extended sample of Graves' work. Priam begs Hector to come within the walls, picturing his own fate if Achilles kills Hector:

> 'And last of all they will kill me: someone will hack or thrust me down in yonder palace gateway, and the hounds lying there will greedily tear my flesh—the very hounds that I fed at table and trained as watchdogs. A young man fallen in battle undergoes no humiliation, even if his body be mangled, and left stark naked; but when a white-headed, white-bearded veteran has his secret parts ripped off by dogs, that is a shocking and pitiable sight indeed!'
>
> Though Priam might pull his hair out by the roots, he could not weaken Hector's resolution.

Because Homer's conception still shows through, the attempt to make Priam sound hysterical does not come off, in spite of the exclamation point. If on the other hand there is no such attempt, why try to steal all dignity from Hecuba, as the passage goes on to do? Homer, incidentally, omitted to point to the wrinkles on her breast:

> Queen Hecuba also wept, undoing her upper garment and displaying a wrinkled breast. 'Hector, my child,' she wailed, 'I charge you by this breast which once gave you suck, to do as your father orders! Achilles is ruthless, and if he kills you there, Andromache and I will be denied the poor solace of weeping over your dead body—carried off to the Greek camp for dogs to tear.'
>
> The old couple continued their lamentations, imploring Hector to come back and organize the city's resistance; but he calmly awaited Achilles, who was bounding towards him on his powerful legs.

Those of you who know the passage, or look it up in one of "the usual solemn, pedantic versions of the *Iliad*," will realize that a good deal is being left out here. "Organize the city's resistance" is Graves' way of putting it, not Homer's, and for the bounding Achilles, Homer has

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simply, "he awaited Achilles as he came on, gigantic." Hector still has some dignity left; indeed, in the circumstances how could he not? But he too is about to have the rug snatched from under him:

> A serpent, coiled in a dark den,
> That has on noxious herbage supped
> Conceives a hatred of all men
> (Such poisons can the soul corrupt),
> And glowering rage, resolves to lie
> In ambush for a passer-by.

> With equal resolution, though less venomous feelings, Hector leaned his polished shield against a buttress of the tower.

Even the snake, with his corrupted soul, is ridiculed. Now follows Hector's soliloquy about whether to retire within the walls after all, or to face Achilles in battle, or to offer him an accommodation. Graves does everything he can to undercut it, in the manner of "Reflections We Doubt Ever Got Reflected," but his only major success is the insertion of an irrelevant aspersion on Trojan business ethics:

> Then I should have to make the royal council swear that no valuables would be concealed or withheld from the common stock. Impossible!

Such scattered yapping at everything in sight does not give the impression of a master-poet's attack on the Dorian aristocracy, or even on the heroic world; it does, however, give the impression of Robert Graves kidding the *Iliad*.

Actually, when we compare a translation which takes the poem seriously with Graves' version, it is pretty clear which conception is the right one. Since Graves has seen fit to compare his work with Richmond Lattimore's (Graves calls him Richard), I shall do the same, using the passage where Athene mounts Diomedes' chariot to help him attack Ares, the war god, himself. Lattimore first:

> So speaking she pushed Sthenelos to the ground from the chariot,
> driving him back with her hand, and he leapt away from it lightly,
> and she herself, a goddess in her anger, stepped into the chariot
> beside brilliant Diomedes, and the oaken axle groaned aloud
> under the weight, carrying a dread goddess and a great man.

This is about as close to the Greek as one can get. There is no doubt, for example, that Diomedes is already in the chariot when Athene gets in. Together with Diomedes, we are in the midst of a tremendous experience.

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Now Graves:

> Reaching out a hand, the goddess dragged Sthenelos, Diomedes' driver, from the chariot, and climbed in herself. Diomedes did the same, and the oaken axle groaned under their weight.

And that is all; no dread goddess and no great man. Diomedes, though satirized, is here the substantial part of the picture. Graves knows that goddesses don't weigh anything. And the meiosis in those verbs! "*Dragged* Sthenelos," "*climbed* in"—Graves has a field day with this particular trick: the Greeks "scamper" towards the ships; heralds "scurry" across the plain; the goddesses Iris and Thetis "clamber" ashore. Graves calls Lattimore's version a competent crib, but prefers his own as a *translation* because it considers "what will be immediately intelligible, and therefore readable, and what will not." As we have seen, Graves apparently thinks that what will be immediately intelligible is that the *Iliad* is a silly poem, and does everything he can to strengthen the impression; actually, even in his version, the poem refutes the charge.

Graves has tried to recast the *Iliad* under the guise of translating it. I do not think this was entirely dishonest, in spite of his obvious desire to amuse the anti-intellectual audience. What the *Iliad* embodies is of course the heroic, and for both Graves and Searle, the heroic is essentially a glorification of violence and butchery. If Priam treats Achilles with reverence over the very body of his slaughtered son, then Priam must be an abject and feeble ninny, and both Graves and Searle do their best to make him one. Searle's satire is direct and brilliant, but Graves' reaction seems to have been more complicated: if Homer was a poet worthy of the name, and something about the poem tells Graves that he was, then he cannot have meant what he seems to mean. After that the step from treating the poem as irony to treating it ironically was easily and perhaps not quite consciously taken. But suppose Graves had had an ear for the heroic—suppose he could have felt Athene mounting his chariot, as it were, or seen Achilles "coming on, gigantic" —then he would have read the scene between Priam and Achilles differently. Both men have experienced the annihilation of all their hopes. For each, all that life has yielded, ultimately, is the dead body of Hector, though each in his way has been supremely endowed by the gods. For Priam to be able to kiss the hands of the man who killed his son, and for Achilles to be able to give back the body of Hector, the nearest thing to a recompense for death that life has afforded him, is a triumph over death, annihilation, and meaninglessness such as few men, and few poets, have won.

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GEORGE P. ELLIOTT

Three Imaginary Autobiographies

THESE THREE NOVELS[1] are autobiographical in form and more or less probable in event. There is an obvious connection between the imagined narrator and the actual author in each case, as the dust jackets make clear: Patrick Cruttwell served in the Intelligence Corps of the British Army in Burma and India during World War II; Cecil Hemley is a native New Yorker and is a partner in a New York business; William Golding, a British novelist, writes about a British artist of roughly the same age. What more profound or intimate connection between each author and his *I* there may be, I have no idea; and in none of these cases does the author invite the reader to inquire further.[2]

Some confessional writing makes a common reader uneasy for entirely unliterary reasons. He feels, as he reads, that the words do not project an imagined character or event but refer invertly to matters which are nobody's business but the writer's. Unless the reader is the sort of person who enjoys eavesdropping or looking at an exhibitionist, he will not like such writing or passages of such writing. But this is complicated by the fact that much entirely successful writing is, whether openly or disguisedly, confessional in form. Humbert Humbert does not cause me literary distress when he exposes himself to my view; Tennessee Williams, Robert Lowell, and J. D. Salinger sometimes in their recent writings do so distress me, and what they expose is nothing like as nasty as what Lolita's lover exposes. Why this uneasiness and resentment?

When Chance Wayne, in *Sweet Bird of Youth,* turns away from the play and asks me to recognize him in myself "and the enemy, time, in us all," I writhe in my seat; for all I can hear, stated in dishonest, inflated, unintentional words, is Tennessee Williams asking me to feel sorry for him himself—like an actor playing Orestes who suddenly lets you know his mask hurts.[3]

When Robert Lowell, in a poem about what a failure his father was as a man, informs me that "As early as 1928, / he owned a house converted to oil, / and redecorated by the architect / of St. Mark's School," I cannot say how little pleased I am to learn it. The poem has no

[1] A KIND OF FIGHTING, by *Patrick Cruttwell.* Macmillan. $3.95. THE EXPERIENCE, by *Cecil Hemley.* Horizon. $3.50. FREE FALL, by *William Golding.* Harcourt, Brace. $3.95.

[2] I begin with this point because I want to use this opportunity to make an addendum to Patrick Cruttwell's essay "Makers and Persons" in the Winter 1959-60 *Hudson Review.* There, he makes preliminary, speculative observations about writers' self-disguise and self-revelation and about the inflamed interest which readers have come to feel, since Boswell, in the private lives of writers, in the *person* of a *maker.*

[3] See Robert Brustein's "Williams' Nebulous Nightmare" in the Summer 1959 *Hudson Review* for an extended discussion of Williams' failings in his later plays.

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structure to give meaning to this trivial fact; it has no elegance to redeem its filial impiety; it does not direct me toward the truth. I cannot imagine anyone's wanting to hear this confession except a psychiatrist, a gossip, or an admiring friend. Since Lowell has the fortune to number among his acquaintance a good many of the makers of literary taste, *Life Studies* got staggeringly good reviews (they were not necessarily hypocritical or sycophantic either, for the reviewers, being friends, really wanted to hear). But the emperor has no clothes on! In most of these poems, Lowell is being himself—not seeing himself as another or as an exemplar, just being himself only. Like tears, most of these poems mean nothing apart from the person of the weeping poet, and to me the book is like a phial of a stranger's tears.

When Buddy Glass excruciates over his *won*derful brother Seymour (or Zooey for that matter), I suffer acute malaise. Buddy never really demonstrates Seymour's wonderful qualities, so that I have only Buddy's adoration to react to rather than the Seymour whom Buddy is strenuously trying to project into my imagination. So far as I can make out, this adoration lacks a cause worthy of its intensity (and of its handsome, self-conscious prose). I uneasily conclude that J. D. Salinger is writing for himself, his friends, and his cult. As to whether Buddy *is* Salinger, I do not know; yet there's a Walter Winchell in us all (does Salinger really teach English? does he spend half his time in a mental hospital? did he come from a large family of quiz kids?). What is interesting in *Seymour* is that Salinger's Buddy writes *as though* he were making an unliterarily private confession, and knows he is doing it. The purpose of this strategy eludes me; the result is not much different from that of less ingenious failures by writers who simply expose themselves indecently without knowing they are doing it.

What's to be learned from this? For one thing, the confessional writer must see what is universal or at least typical in his experience and his person; otherwise he may try to impress his reader with the purpleness of his psyche or with the augustness of his family's station or with the exquisiteness of his sensibilities, none of which ploys works as well in literature as in life. For another thing, the confessional writer must wear his mask consistently (nothing should be included just because it really happened to the man beneath the mask, but only because he has made something of what really happened); or, if he does not wear a mask, he must see himself as another would or does see him (no one can or wants to see my nose as I see it, though I might amuse others by showing them myself seeing my nose tall as a skyscraper).

For examples of works to pair against these prominent failures, works in which the autobiographical techniques are used successfully as opposed to those in which they are not, I would set *Long Day's Journey into Night* against *Sweet Bird of Youth*, *Heart's Needle* against *Life Studies*, and against *Seymour* two of the three novels here under review.

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A Kind of Fighting opens with an exemplary sentence for a novel in autobiographical form: "England in the nineteen-fifties holds many men like myself." Throughout the book, Henry Little, once a college history teacher in Sagha, an imaginary country which closely resembles Burma, preserves his understanding of himself as typical; however, the types into which he puts himself are so numerous and so accurately understood that he becomes only the more substantial as the novel progresses. Cruttwell's task in presenting Little as well as writing in his person was made the easier by reason of the action of the story. Little is narrating of his own story only what reveals the character and adventures of a former student, Lin Soe, who becomes, during the Japanese occupation of Sagha, the Leader of his people; after the war he leads his country to independence from England; he is martyred, and Sagha relapses into a nationless agglomeration of communities. Little's involvement in all this is deftly managed; his adventures are never very unlikely, yet they are exciting; he understands much politically, yet not too much; he does not claim a greater understanding of the Saghans than he demonstrates. The only serious weaknesses of the book are the amorous episodes, which are both dull and unnecessary. The total effect is less that of a romance, despite the exotic and splendid ingredients which keep the story lively, than that of a meditation on history, on the ironies of events and of the versions of events, on the way reality changes with recounting. Its flavor may be tasted in the last sentences. Little is speaking of the "Life History" of Lin Soe, to which he has been asked to contribute (instead of so contributing he has written the imaginary memoir the reader is just completing).

> All the Saghans who can read will read it, and they will believe every word of it. And history is what historians write, and that will be history. And what I have written must be fiction.

Next to *Passage to India* it is the best British-in-the-Orient novel I know, certainly streets wiser and more graceful than *Burmese Days*. It is *the* novel about the dissolution of His Majesty's empire.

The Experiment, an autobiographical novel in form, more personal in tone than *A Kind of Fighting,* has an admirable beginning.

> I shall not listen to him if he comes into my office and speaks to me about things other than business. There is no reason why I should waste several precious hours because he has had an experience. It is he who has had the experience, not I. I am completely external to the matter and, to be frank, I scarcely understand a word he says. Quite what the experience was remains vague. He himself admits that it is indescribable and yet he continues to describe it. But this time if he begins I shall escort him politely to the door. "George," I shall say, "I have a busy morning."

The lucid, intellectual style is established. The narrator is seen as seeing himself, if only by the use of the present and future tenses; more-

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over, he is established as being outside the main experience but affected by it, as he is throughout the book. With this much given, story is possible. The novel is built on the effect of George's religious struggles, both self-deceiving and genuine, on himself, on his wife, and especially on his friend, the narrator Walt. The reflective, concerned, unnarrative style suits the subject well: it is an evidence of Walt's clarity of sight; and just as such prose is incapable of rendering hidden experience, so Walt cannot understand George's experience which, however angry it makes him, also fascinates him. Behavior and reflection on behavior are represented well. That "the experience" itself is inscrutable is the main point of the book—a point which is a bit overstressed, granted the prose in which the book is written, the rational, urbane, yet sympathetic prose.

> Who will believe me, who will accept the fact that George really exists, I mean the new George, not the old one? . . . But how many men have been partners with a saint? It is a curious destiny. One that makes you think.

True, but I wish it had made Walt think in his capacity as narrator a little more passionately. Everything a reader could ask for is here but passion: George's mystical passion is impenetrable, as it ought to be in a realistic fiction; but Walt might have reached a passion of curiosity and bafflement, the vicarious passion which he seemed to be reaching toward, had his hard prose ever cracked under the strain; but it never does for there is not quite enough strain. Yet there is a formal rightness to this unimpassioned tone, for Walt is a wholly secular, worried, spiritually meager, intelligent professional man of a sort in whom New York abounds—an unmarried man whose affairs have little love in them. That such a man should be convinced that his friend has had an experience in which he himself does not believe, and that he should be anxious but unimpassioned about it, is no doubt right both formally and humanly. It is chiefly on the reader that Hemley is rough: when an author creates the possibilities of passionate engagement and then refuses to gratify them, he may be right but the reader suffers in a bleak way.

Six years ago William Golding published *Lord of the Flies,* a novel which shows every sign of becoming one of those quirky minor masterpieces which the British are so fond of reading and making. It sits comfortably beside Richard Hughes' *Innocent Voyage,* which is also about children turned monsters, and it is a good deal better than Rose Macaulay's *Orphan Island,* which it resembles in several respects. It belongs to the literature of microcosmic societies which degenerate when isolated on an island. Nordhoff and Hall's *Pitcairn's Island* was good fun, and Maruyama's *Ana-ta-han,* about a shipload of Japanese soldiers self-marooned on an island for several years after World War II, is the most horrible I know; both are based on fact. *Lord of the*

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Flies[4] is a fable, often clumsily written, about several British boys who survive a plane crash on a tropical island and who descend down the layers of civilization quite appallingly. Probabilities gradually evaporate, and the fable swells in magnitude and power, both realistic and symbolic, until the characters' passions achieve a sort of horrifying grandeur. To have the characters at the end reduced to boys again by being rescued by a Navy boat (" 'Fun and games,' said the officer") produces as strong and literarily valuable a shock as I've had in a long time.

Free Fall, Golding's most recent novel, is no less fabulous (and no less clumsy though in different ways) than *Lord of the Flies,* but it is finally less successful. It is not that his powers have deserted him. On the contrary—the characters, the events, the style are as good as ever, the accomplishments of a left-handed master. I think there are two troubles in this book. The first is that he chose to set his fable in England in the thirties and forties. Reality—ordinary social and psychological reality—forces the fable to scramble itself formally out of all chronology and good sense, and also, which is worse, out of coherence; furthermore, the test of reality sometimes makes the events themselves look rather preposterous. This is especially true of the late scenes in which the narrator, now a war prisoner, is being interviewed by a Nazi inquisitor. Realistically these scenes look feeble next to *Darkness at Noon.* And if they are to be taken as being only fabulous, they do not seem to improve much on those in *1984.* The love affairs, the politics, the salvation through art—all these parts of this fable for the times have been used often enough so that, to be successful, they must be given a specificity and significance which Golding only sometimes achieves.

The second trouble with *Free Fall* is in the narrator. It is not that Golding invites you to speculate about himself. Sam Mountjoy retains his consistency as a character and he is certainly seen as typical.

> How did I lose my freedom? I must go back and tell the story over. It is a curious story, not so much in the external events which are common enough, but in the way it presents itself to me, the only teller. . . . I put the day in the park first in my story, not because I was young, a baby almost; but because freedom has become more and more precious to me.

No, there is nothing technically wrong with Golding's strategy. What I object to is something fundamental and only partially literary: I don't believe for a minute that it is Sam Mountjoy telling the story. I cannot believe that a slum-bred whore's child who grows up to be a painter could ever write about most of his experiences—even granted that he would have such typically "outsider" experiences—as Sam is supposed to write about them. Imagine *Jude the Obscure* told by Jude in the style of Samuel Butler. Perhaps Golding hoped for a schizoid disloca-

[4] Now in Capricorn Books, $1.25.

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tion by putting Sam's story in the first person. The result, unhappily, is a simple feeling that the author was clumsy. I, at least, prefer my third person characters in the third person. No one is outsider to himself enough to see his own nose only as the mirror shows it to him.

In the first two of these novels it was not only the author who conceived of the narrators; also the narrators conceived of themselves. In the third it was only the author who conceived of the narrator. This area I believe to be near the heart of the matter: the narrator must conceive of himself as a person other than the maker. This is true whether the narrator is the author himself, the author masked, or an imagined character.

"The only reason for the existence of a novel," said James in *The Art of Fiction,* "is that it does attempt to represent life." The same is true of an autobiography. A little later in the essay he speaks of the historian and the novelist, and surely it is no violation to add the autobiographer to them. "To represent and illustrate the past, the actions of men, is the task of either writer." In the matter of point of view in confessional literature, there is no distinction, so far as the reader is concerned, between the actual and the imagined narrator. In any case, what matters crucially is that the narrator, whether Augustine, Proust, or Humbert Humbert, have a good idea of whom he is projecting or questing. It is quite all right for him to advertise himself, as Norman Mailer does, so long as he has a self to advertise other than the one holding the pen he is writing the advertisement with, as Mailer often does not.

Is there a worse first sentence in fiction that that of Warren's *Band of Angels,* in which the narrator asks, not strategically but in all miserable sincerity, "Who am I?" Or a better than "Call me Ishmael"?

ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS

The Short Stories of Herbert Gold[1]

[FOR ME TO WRITE ABOUT MR. GOLD in *The Hudson Review* is like adding—in the classic phrase—incest to injury. We have both published a good deal in this magazine; we are personal friends. What objectivity I can muster stands against this background. *Caveat lector. Caveat Gold.*]

The mainspring of most American fiction is a fresh-featured, bright-eyed young man, fuzzy-cheeked and fuzzy-minded, upon whose origi-

[1] LOVE AND LIKE by *Herbert Gold.* The Dial Press. $3.95.

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nal resilience life scrawls uncouth characters. When he is pretty well marked-up and stiffening toward middle-age, bewilderment deepens as the capacity for surprise declines; and the little story generally peters out in one form or another of sour self-disgust. So generalized, the pattern applies almost as well to the creators of American fiction as to their heroes. While the American hero sinks into the dramatic depths of drink, dope, and suicide, his maker commonly disappears into television or Hollywood, and ceases to create without quite ceasing to write. In playing life's opening gambits, American authors display characteristic verve and originality; they tend to bog down in the middle phases, and drag through the end game, where the prime virtues are rigor and economy.

Two classes of novelist are largely exempt from these sweeping generalizations. The J. P. Marquand-type novelist writes the same story but writes it backwards; starting with a corrupted hero, he traces the deviations of this sinner back to an original state of innocence. Thus he avoids the problem of maintaining his hero's energy, and his own, by substituting nostalgia for energy. On the other hand, we have our beat friends, about whom we had best say, in charity, that for most of them it is still too early to tell. If the beat way is only what it now seems to be, sloppy American romanticism stewed in some more of its own rhetoric, then it is not a solution to anything, but merely the original problem, played louder and faster than before, and in stereophonic sound yet. Of course the last test of any esthetic creed is its esthetic product; and I suppose the best we can ask of the beat kittens now is that they succeed at something—give us something beyond *On the Road* and *Howl*—in evidence that they have not confused an episode with a career.

When one has narrowed the field so drastically, by eliminating commercials and frantics, what is left? The most forward of a not very riotous crop seem to me Saul Bellow and Herbert Gold. They are not the portentous, construction-type novelist—baroque with flashbacks, heavy with family history, and studded with massive sexual encounters. They are not so far out there that it hurts. They are neither Wagnerian and slow nor kamikaze and abrupt; their style is, above all, mobile and various. They write high, low, nervous, and busy. They are about as beat as is implied in being nervous, but in a quite unprogrammatic way. They have brains, and are not ashamed to use them; they live in our world, the real world of history, where the man who wants to be good automatically inhabits a nightmare. They have taken the fresh-faced innocent, and made him do a lot of new tricks. Yet the question remains—have they transcended the limitations of the Candide-story, or given signs of being ready to? The publication of Mr. Gold's fifth book—a collection of his stories—raises this question with new urgency.

If any reader of *Hudson Review* needs to be told, Herbert Gold can write the mother tongue. He has an unerring sense of pace; he has a

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fine ear for the idiom; he is not precious or cute or addicted to that corny American brand of self-pity. He has a talent for hitting crucial moral issues as with a cleaver; and above all this, he is a natural storyteller, who likes to narrate, and generally does so. He thinks fictionally —that is, his characters act out no formal scheme, but the undercurrent of our feeling about them is steady and purposeful.

This is the equipment of a formidable novelist; and the stories in *Love and Like* are at their best when they give themselves the space which a novelist needs to develop his effects. "The Heart of the Artichoke" (1951) is early Gold; "Love and Like" (1959) is late Gold. Both clearly qualify as major stories; between them, they occupy nearly a third of the present volume; seen in conjunction, they suggest the fine range of Herbert Gold's talents—as well as some disquieting things about his direction. Under pressure of increased experience, a remarkable first vision has narrowed, fractured, and become increasingly negative. There are certainly reasons for this change, only some of which come within the purview of literary discussion; there are certainly some advantages connected with it. Yet, on the whole, it conforms too closely for comfort with the American pattern of innocence exploited and dissipated and replaced only by a sense of loss. Setting out to be a picaresque saint, it is possible that Herbert Gold has been betrayed by history (both world and personal) into re-enacting the role of the American Adam.

"The Heart of the Artichoke" is of the vintage, and very much in the mode of, *The Man Who Was Not With It*—about which it is now conventional (though no less true) to say that it is a minor masterpiece. It is a story of violently divided feelings, half-comic, half-tragic; it is told in a dialect founded remotely on English and it is a remarkably full and uncalculated narration, which never reveals the meager hand of the fellow who must budget his fictional resources. The "Artichoke" might so easily have been a cute, nostalgic study in Jewish folkways. It has a number of familiar props—hard-working papa, warm-hearted momma, the son who yearns for culture. Its rich metaphorical style is based on the fruity locutions of Yiddish—a comic tradition exploited and perhaps over-exploited in American writing. But the central situation is not handled cutely; it culminates in a tableau as violent and static as that which ends Kafka's "The Judgment." The theme is not exploited, it is grasped all the way round, and held, and used, by a sure and steady hand. The story is all ripeness and assurance; I cannot feel the dead hand of contrivance upon any part of it.

"Love and Like" is also a powerful and moving story; but it is the sort of story which a clever sentimentalist like Irwin Shaw could do just about as well. It describes an encounter between two people of whom one is an absolute innocent and the other an absolute monster. Dan Shaper is a good guy, a real good guy, probably too good a guy; and his former wife is a complete beast, in whom, frankly, it is very hard to believe. We are given to see her impact on Shaper; it is pre-

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sented with all the impact of a brand-new discovery. But we are not allowed to see, or even imagine, his impact on her. This of course is the situation itself. In divorce, it is appallingly easy to react and difficult to understand. It is the wonderful struggle to understand that I prize in the "Artichoke"; it is a certain willingness to repose in the achievement of a dramatic (melodramatic?) contrast that I deplore in "Love and Like."

To be perfectly distinct about it, I don't deny that the later story, as written, makes a big bang; but it is the sort of bang that comes from blocked rather than deepened vision. No doubt women exist who are utterly inconsiderate, treacherous, and destructive; but men who have been married to them long enough to beget two children are not as naive as Dan Shaper is shown to be. It is not the fault in verisimilitude that matters here, but a manner of exploiting fictional materials which brings one too quickly to an end of them. When Shaper has been reduced to contemplating suicide, the story has made its "point." Well, all right. Divorce hurts like hell, and in the toils of it anyone may be led to feel like Dan Shaper. But the sort of searching, flexible, comprehensive mind to which we grew accustomed in "The Heart of the Artichoke" and *The Man Who Was Not With It* would not have dropped us off in a pool of self-pity.

Generally, the short stories in *Love and Like* do seem to involve a pretty loathesome assortment of females. There is a girl who has an affair, and even as it is going on, writes highly detailed letters to her lover's wife. There is a girl who has an affair on a transatlantic boat, and uses it to torture her husband. There is a girl who has an affair with her college instructor in order to get from him a list of bohemian acquaintances in Paris. Very little love and no liking whatever enters into the pattern of these relationships; and, inversely, the most genuine characters in the volume seem to be those most fully cut off from the relations of loving and liking. If this is a fault, it is not one which flaws the individual stories. The technical standard of *Love and Like* is remarkably high; there is not a clumsy sentence or an artificial bit of business in its 300 pages. But the price one pays for writing youthful masterpieces is to be judged thereafter by masterpiece standards. Coming from most current practitioners of the short story, this would be a more than promising volume. For the friends of Herbert Gold, especially in conjunction with his last novel, *The Optimist,* it may be, rather, a cause of trouble and concern.

For *The Optimist,* frolicking half-seriously, half-humorously with the career of a hero whose public life rather resembles that of Harold Stassen, never decides whether he is good, bad, or funny enough to support a bold effect. Here, the fizz of the book's early style definitely wears off toward the end, and so comes to seem adventitious. Style and thought alike are wasted on a cricket like Burr Fuller, whose political ideas are as skimpy as his love-life is undirected and helter-skelter. In the end, wife Laura deceives him with best friend Mike; it is supposed

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to be a crushing blow. But he has deceived her, himself, Mike, and everyone else, so regularly, so blithely, so unconsciously—his marriage is so nearly a dead letter already—that the force of the blow is diffused and lost. We leave Burr Fuller wandering about in a mass of confusion —neither elected nor defeated, married to a woman he thinks he doesn't love, just over an affair with one he thinks he does. He is in terrible trouble; he badly needs what is popularly called Help; and here, after some of the first ponderous ruminations that Herbert Gold has committed to print, the book stops.

As a novel, as an entertainment, as a confrontation of reality, *The Optimist* is flawed and inconclusive; yet I think it may well be the spring-board for something much better and deeper. This is the problem, right enough; whether as politician, or lover, or novelist, the young man who is an optimist must find something to be besides an ex-optimist. If he is going to assault this problem seriously, he cannot be simply a silly young man; or if he is, he must be seen, like Ibsen's Peer Gynt, by a knowing, and preferably wicked eye. His problem is essentially the problem of finding some wellspring at which to renew and enrich his identity. Failing to do this, he can be even more fun than succeeding; but the theme then invites clarity, detachment, and a good deal more irony than pathos. The failure of Burr Fuller is that he is an Evelyn Waugh hero treated with sympathy.

All this sounds sour enough—and would not have been worth saying at all, if the confusion with which Herbert Gold is struggling were not so clearly a fruitful confusion. Ibsen too struggled with it in middle-life, emerging from it to strike the majestic chords of *Brand, Peer Gynt,* and the whole vast cycle of the modern plays. Themes like self-discovery and self-renewal are knotty and complex; no man tackles really big themes like these without risking now and then a failure. But even errors (as somebody has said) may be the portals of discovery. All Herbert Gold's best writing, it seems to me, has been a kind of angry, loving wrestle in which self gets asserted or defined. Two dangers beset him, from which less gifted writers are largely exempt. His wit and verbal dexterity may lead to display-writing; the depth and complexity of his themes may result in factitious intensity, i.e., melodrama. But excess of talent is a rare and wonderful failing; and as to Herbert Gold's command of his many gifts, I think there are more reasons to be confident than downcast.

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MARVIN MUDRICK

A Warning to Optimists[1]

NOTHING IS SO CLEAR ABOUT THE NOVEL as that it remains, for most novelists and most critics, a form without an instructive past or a useful future. The great 19th-century novels were written, without benefit of theory or tradition, under an immediate pressure of genius as astounding as that which produced the Elizabethan drama. But literary theory, from Aristotle to Eliot, has concerned itself exclusively with poetry; the novel is, in any case, too recent and too shockingly popular to have achieved the sort of respectability that encourages scrutiny of what it is rather than what it seems to be in terms of something else—poetry, or backstairs gossip, or history. So the same bad novels get written over and over again, and publishers can always find critics—who don't quite know exactly what to look for in fiction—to praise them: to praise them, even, as *original.* "So far as I know," Horace Gregory begins cautiously, "Mr. Harnack's book [*The Work of an Ancient Hand*] shows him to be the most highly gifted American novelist of his generation" (after all, so far as we know, this may be the first novel by a member of Mr. Harnack's generation that Mr. Gregory has read); then, throwing consistency as well as caution to the winds, Mr. Gregory concludes: "—certainly he is the most original and perceptive."

Well, "original." *The Work of an Ancient Hand* is a senile wheeze of a chronicle novel, plot as creaky as the rockingchairs in the yawning vacuity of an Iowa town the dusty motions of whose citizens it exhaustively registers, every event testifying to the author's incapacity for distinguishing journalistic cardboard from live tissue, all of it bathed in a prose like embalming fluid. The quality is pervasive; but the last few pages of the novel will do as an instance. For the first 310 pages, the Reverend Vernon Kallsen suffers from a sense of guilt over the death to which he drove his adopted son, from a horrid marriage, from a hatred of people and a loathing of sensuality, and from unbounded ennui at the spectacle of Mr. Harnack's characters, to the point of attempting suicide. By page 311 the suicide has failed, and Vernon, just like that, begins to feel pretty good:

[1] THE WORK OF AN ANCIENT HAND, by *Curtis Harnack.* Harcourt, Brace. $4.50. FALSE COIN, by *Harvey Swados.* Little, Brown. $4.00. A SEPARATE PEACE, by *John Knowles.* Macmillan. $3.50. A HERITAGE AND ITS HISTORY, by *I. Compton-Burnett.* Simon and Schuster. $3.75. THE LAST VALLEY, by *J. B. Pick.* Little, Brown. $3.50. THE CENTER OF THE GREEN, by *John Bowen.* McDowell, Obolensky. $3.50. BILLY LIAR, by *Keith Waterhouse.* Norton. $3.95. THE FEATHERS OF DEATH, by *Simon Raven.* Simon and Schuster. $3.75. AIMEZ-VOUS BRAHMS . . . , by *Françoise Sagan.* Dutton. $2.95. THE GRASS, by *Claude Simon.* Braziller. $3.75. CAFÉ CÉLESTE, by *Françoise Mallet-Joris.* Farrar, Straus and Cudahy. $4.95. JEALOUSY, by *Alain Robbe-Grillet.* Evergreen. $1.75.

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> Fallen indeed! But he had been saved; he had risen again. The exultation of being alive filled him with happiness—a joy that was sweeping, satisfying, a general pleasure. The white pigeon fluttering above seemed a thing of wonder. He wanted to speak to it—to someone—to the whole world.

By page 313 he is really flying, and the novel ends vibrato and fortissimo:

> With a wonder that seemed to flower inside him, filling him with rapture and a surprising hope, he recognized, suddenly, this new awakening. Aloud he said: "I believe in God."

Still, the corn grows as high in New York as in Iowa. Harvey Swados, who proved in his collection *On the Line* that he could be a serious (if primarily documentary) writer, is very knowing and very ambitious in *False Coin,* but he is not serious. *False Coin* is a name-dropping novel, it depends for its effect on persuading the reader that most of the characters are right out of the weekly newsmagazines, that under the libel-proof epidermis of pseudonyms lurk a number of American notorieties, that the author is giving us the lowdown on this sociologist or that publisher's wife, that the (far too obviously silly) project they are on might well be sponsored by Rockefeller or Ford; and that out of all this laborious carpentry will come a fable about life in our time. Nor is Mr. Swados even cynical enough to be clever in the manner of a *New Yorker* profile, which is where this material belongs; though he is sentimental enough to perpetrate a plot full of tight-lipped stock ironies, a pipedream of an affair (between the 50-year-old hero and a "truly beautiful," intelligent, sympathetic, sexy six-foot-tall blonde whose obtuse husband doesn't understand that she wants a baby), much bogus novelistic "business" (hands tremble so badly that they can't light a cigarette, peculiarities of speech with no relevance to anything else are carefully noted, a girl sits on a desk "swinging her trim leg . . . so that her pump swung free from her instep"), and page after page of portentous cottonwool dialogue:

> "I'm a lone wolf," I said, "and while there are still enough people who will ask for me to handle their sound so that I can make a living, the industry will be just as happy when I'm retired or dead and let them produce their meaningless homogenized sounds for a public that doesn't even know what's being done to it." Then I quit and attacked my pork chop.
>
> "It's amazing," he said. "Amazing. But I ought not to be surprised that it's hard for other people to be honest too. I remember an old Hungarian director in Hollywood—he made a couple good ones but then his luck turned and he faded away—saying to me that the real test of maturity is to understand that the world is full of people who have the same problems as you."
>
> "It's one thing," I said, "to know that there are other people in

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the same boat, but it's another thing to stay becalmed—to use that knowledge as an excuse not to bother to rock the damn boat."

A Separate Peace gets a palpitating sendoff from a dozen dustjacket admirers (climaxed by a thrilled question from England, where *The Catcher in the Rye* has been consecrated for years as the great American novel: "Is he the successor to Salinger for whom we have been waiting so long?"). The safe road to critical approval seems to be this crafty self-indulgent toying with thought and language for the purpose of suggesting big issues and unplumbable wisdom: "Nothing endures, not a tree, not love, not even a death by violence"; "Because it seemed clear that wars were not made by generations and their special stupidities, but that wars were made instead by something ignorant in the human heart." It is true that Mr. Knowles accepts perhaps the thorniest of fictional challenges: to attempt a character, a boy at that, whose genial and spontaneous vitality will stand for all vitality. But the character of Finny is only asserted, the efforts to make him come alive are embarrassingly inept; there is a single achieved scene, the nightmarish "trial" at the boys' school, itself spoiled by a predictable melodramatic ending; and the rest of the novel founders on allegorical ambitions and fine writing.

These three novels are all by young Americans, and irreverence is permitted. It takes fortitude, however, to brave the blizzard of dustjacket encomia, from a pantheon of the semi-illustrious and the anonymously authoritative, for the latest book by Miss Ivy Compton-Burnett. A typical devotee compares her to Congreve, Lewis Carroll, the Jacobean dramatists, Sophocles, Henry James, Dostoievsky, and—surprise—Jane Austen; to say no more for the moment. One would like to have the temerity to state that *A Heritage and Its History* is a kind of charade, whose mildly amusing toy-soldier formality—as remote from the toughmindedness of Jane Austen as from the structure of baffled and disciplined feeling that is the strength of Congreve's formality and wit—loses little by the outrageous coincidences it generates, does not gain by its cumbrous pseudo-Classical (or pseudo-Jacobean) apparatus of adultery and incest, and is badly injured by delusions of grandeur that the author seems to share with her characters:

> There was a minute of silence when the three men were alone.
>
> "It was like a Greek tragedy," said Walter. "With people saying things with a meaning they did not know, or with more meaning than they knew. It is not the first today. Will it always be like this?"

—a passage that also illustrates Miss Compton-Burnett's sustained and morbid fondness for the word "it," with which, by butchering syntax and common usage, she cultivates an appearance of resonant ambiguity:

> "It was not what you think," said Walter.
>
> "It was not," said Simon. "And you can surely think again. Your great-uncle is what you know."

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"Ah, how I have found it!" said Rhoda. "How I find it still! How I look always to find it!"

But one does not have it, whatever it may be, or where.

The trouble with another English novelist is much easier to diagnose: J. B. Pick had just staggered out on to Curzon Street from a festival of Ingmar Bergman movies before he started his new novel. *The Last Valley* is an allegory in turgid black and white, peopled by costumed simpletons who march to their Nordic doom uttering clipped profundities about the human condition:

". . . it's difficult to joke when you're hungry; a carrot can be more welcome than a vision of the angels in all their glory."

"The carrot is from God as well as the angels," said the priest.

"You talk from a book," said Vogel. "A word like God can be used too often."

Mr. Pick doesn't have the advantage of Bergman's imaginative camera; but his novel—rather like a Bergman scenario—induces some second thoughts about the work of his Swedish master.

The Center of the Green, on the other hand, is a genuinely somber document on the self-annihilation of an English family. It is honestly written, accurately observed, and it makes no concessions to any false gods. It makes concessions, in fact, to no gods at all; and the uniform impression of despair and languor under the blows of life leads to no crisis or outbreak, it has nothing against which to define itself, it becomes ultimately an image of the dull and unresourceful pointlessness of any possible life; and so it fails. Fiction is lunar, it defers to the sun of human vitality, without which it sheds no light.

Billy Liar has plenty of resourcefulness and irritation, it shudders with exacerbated vitality; even handicapped by the stupid and unmotivated ending that Mr. Waterhouse settles for, it is probably the funniest and most modest—and therefore the best—novel yet in the long-delayed mutiny inaugurated by *Lucky Jim* (itself a very bad novel, a pillar of cunning incorrigible vulgarity) and dedicated to training a spotlight on the swamp of postwar lower-middle-class England, that drab and penniless imitation America. There are so many redoubtable enemies— parody-family, parody-girls, imbecile job, hideous provincial town full of people "content to be nobody but themselves," fly-specked coffee bars and dancehalls—that Billy protects himself with lies, the flashier the better: an imaginary country into which he can heroically withdraw; vaudeville routines and dreams of glory as a TV gag-writer; eloquent commitments to three girls, two of whom he rather loathes; shirked responsibilities, unmailed letters, misappropriated stamps, all the guilt and justifiable rebelliousness of thwarted youthful intelligence. Self-pity doesn't occur to Billy, only the gallows-humor with which he observes everything, from the family amenities at breakfast—

I was greeted by the usual breathing noises.

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"You decided to get up then," my mother said, slipping easily into the second series of conversations of the day. My stock replies were "Yes," "No, I'm still in bed" and a snarled "What does it look like?" according to mood. Today I chose "Yes" and sat down to my boiled egg, stone cold as threatened. This made it a quarter to nine.

The old man looked up from some invoices and said: "And you can start getting bloody well dressed before you come down in a morning." So far the dialogue was taking a fairly conventional route and I was tempted to throw in one of the old stand-bys, "Why do you always begin your sentences with an 'And'?" Gran, another dress fanatic who always seemed to be fully and even elaborately attired even at two in the morning whe she slunk downstairs after the soda-water, chipped in: "He wants to burn that raincoat, then he'll have to get dressed of a morning." One of Gran's peculiarities, and she had many, was that she would never address anyone directly but always went through an intermediary, if necessary some static object such as a cupboard.

to his doomed effort at seducing, with the aid of a vouched-for aphrodisiac, the least responsive of his fiancées—

"Are you looking forward to getting married?"

"I think about it every minute of the day," she said. I disliked the way she talked, tempering her flat northern voice with the mean, rounded vowels she had picked up at the Stradhoughton College of Commerce.

"Dalling," I said. I began stroking her hair, moving as quickly as possible down the side of her face and on to her shoulder. She started the nose-rubbing act, and I seized her roughly and began kissing her. My lips on hers, I decided that I might as well try to get my tongue into her mouth but she kept her lips hard and closed. She pulled her face away suddenly so that my tongue slithered across her cheek and I was licking her, like a dog. It was not a very promising start.

"Don't ever fall in love with anybody else," I said in the grave, sad voice. "Love you, pet," she said, leaning forward and nibbling my ear. I caught hold of her again and started fumbling, as idly as I could manage it, at the square buttons of her neat blue suit. The Witch struggled free again.

"Let's talk about our cottage, pet," she said.

I counted seven to myself, seeing the red rash in front of my eyes. Obviously the pill was not working yet, or perhaps in the Witch's case I should have given her three or four.

Billy deserves to escape. Requiring him at the end to turn about—"excited and buoyant"!—from the train for London is neither plausible nor just; though possibly Mr. Waterhouse was driven to it by the unhappy thought that London would be no better.

The Feathers of Death is a perhaps authentic vestige of imperial England, one of those very literate novels steeped in the ethos of the

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public-school and King's-College world that for Americans (and Billy Liar) is more mysterious and remote than China or Peru. The dialogue is wonderfully apt and persuasive (*Brideshead Revisited* without the canonical sentimentality), the manners of the army officers awe-inspiring (Lieutenant-Colonel the Lord Nicholas Sanvoisin particularly impresses by his easy air of not finding the universe too much for him), the narrative well managed for suspense and arriving at a climax in the surefire courtmartial scene. The grain in the ointment is the book's curiously intent and equivocal attitude toward homosexuality. Since the motivation and focus of the novel is a homosexual affair, this attitude is crucial. What, for one American at least, remains puzzling is whether this is simply the upper-class English attitude (as the novel implies); in any case it seems too special, it is in effect prurient because it upsets the author's deliberately arranged formal balance between "normal" and "abnormal," because it diverts the reader's attention from the situation before him to a moral obliquity which is being enjoyed rather than faced.

Mlle. Sagan offers no puzzles, only a limpidly trashy novel to prove that the United States has no corner on the tired-housewife audience. Not to speak of influences, but to identify the area in which the nuisance was committed, *Aimez-Vous Brahms* . . (the two dots were sternly prescribed by the author) merely borrows the situation of Colette's *Chéri* and mashes it to a Heinz purée: "she was probably more female than any woman he had ever known"; "the morning after that crazy, tender evening when she had kissed him . . ."; "She stumbled, blind with tears"; "He said nothing, let in the clutch. For the first time something had occurred between them." With a little luck, it may yet turn out to be the worst novel ever written.

Finally there are three serious novels, also French, which redeem the national honor. *The Grass* suffers dreadfully from a Faulknerian elephantiasis of image and syntax: forty-page sentences, composed of stammering repetitions, rewordings, indefinitely postponed modifiers, parentheses within parentheses; a prodigious monologue always imprecise and always vainly striving for precision—". . . the old couple, then, brought together here by the mere existence, the virtue, the functioning, the obscure, blind, and fecund oscillation of that indefatigable shuttle foraging since the beginning of time in the shadowy, obscure and secret vestibule of that tabernacle which is the gentle womb of women, and not only because, forty years ago . . ." But the horror of time suspended and of time past and passing, while an old spinster dies and her relatives wait, somehow shakes free as well as makes use of the paralytic impediment of the style:

> . . . the two of them, the man and the woman, today only an old couple, not actually bickering (for apparently the man-mountain had long since stopped answering other than by those vague, indistinct sounds uttered not as a response but as a kind of signal, and

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> even more: a signal not of attention, of interest in what she was saying, but somehow merely as a manifestation (the sound, the guttural noise) of existence, a reflex provoked not by words but by silence (like the traveller dozing in the monotonous noise of the train and waking at the stops) . . .), not quarrelling, then, but accomplishing the series of gestures, of rites, accompanied by words or not—listened-to or not—sanctioning each day's end, Louise able to see them both appearing, gradually materializing through the noises of the nocturnal rain, the black lines mingling, superimposing, cancelling each other out as in old films . . .

Café Céleste is an accomplished novel of a comfortably old-fashioned kind: the author examines, from an Olympian distance and with expert attention to enlivening detail, a number of individuals whose lives are related by way of some common interest or residence or haunt —in this case, the run-down little café that gives the novel its name. Particularly successful is the unperturbed representation of a boundlessly vindictive homely girl ("For years she had prided herself on possessing nothing, on being not only the plainest of all but also the worst dressed, the most ill-tempered, the least attractive woman in the world"), who sets out to make the world pay. Mlle. Mallet-Joris' style is cool and lucid, her comments are invariably shrewd, and she never even nods in the direction of the melodramatic temptations inherent in the kind of novel she has chosen to write: no cataclysms, no murders, no suicides. The novel is, nevertheless, disappointing: it has all the negative virtues, and some positive minor ones; but the author is too remote, her coolness becomes glacial, her strategies take on the appearance of manipulation. There is ultimately no mastering interest or concern—in a person, or a relationship, or a situation—to lift it beyond its assured level of professional accomplishment.

The most difficult, and the best, of this dozen is the new novel by Alain Robbe-Grillet. The form of *Jealousy* is an interior monologue that disintegrates the presiding ego and reconstitutes it into the substance of the objects that surround it and define its obsession. The obsession is, of course, jealousy: the leit-motifs of the obsession—the centipede squashed on the wall, the ambiguous auto trip to town, the enigmatic wife standing before the mirror brushing her beautiful hair —in their continual recurrence combine to destroy chronology and to establish the pathologically cyclical rhythms of the mind whose torment is the novel, until all significant events are drawn out of time into the very zone of the obsession, the imagined (or imaginary) hotel bedroom in which the possible betrayal eternally takes place, and which in turn dissolves into the hatred whose fond but unsustainable outward image is a purifying death by fire—

> The two long antennae accelerate their alternating swaying. The creature has stopped in the center of the wall, at eye level. The considerable development of the posterior legs identifies it unmistakably

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as the Scutigera or "spider-centipede." In the silence, from time to time, the characteristic buzzing can be heard, probably made by the buccal appendages.

Franck, without saying a word, stands up, wads his napkin into a ball as he cautiously approaches, and squashes the creature against the wall. Then, with his foot, he squashes it against the bedroom floor.

Then he comes back toward the bed and in passing hangs the towel on its metal rack near the washbowl.

The hand with the tapering fingers has clenched into a fist on the white sheet. The five widespread fingers have closed over the palm with such force that they have drawn the cloth with them: the latter shows five convergent creases. . . .

In his haste to reach his goal, Franck increases his speed. The jolts become more violent. Nevertheless he continues to drive faster.

In the darkness, he has not seen the hole running halfway across the road. The car makes a leap, skids. . . . On this bad road the driver cannot straighten out in time. The blue sedan is going to crash into a roadside tree whose rigid foliage scarcely shivers under the impact, despite its violence.

The car immediately burst into flames. The whole brush is illuminated by the crackling, spreading fire. It is the sound the centipede makes, motionless again on the wall, in the center of the panel.

Listening to it more carefully, this sound is more like a breath than a crackling: the brush is now movng down the loosened hair. No sooner has it reached the bottom than it quickly enters the ascending phase of the cycle, describing a curve which brings it back to its point of departure on the smooth hair of the head, where it begins moving down once again.

It is not only M. Robbe-Grillet's techniques that are striking and evocative, but the scrupulousness and continence with which they are used, and the extraordinary precision of the language—a parody of mathematics that renders the meticulousness of obsession—with which they coöperate. The statement of the action is inseparable from the action (the independent existence of which is extremely dubious), and both are imprisoned in a single mind on the verge of breaking; yet the effect is not sensational or mystifying, but calm, orderly, and fated.

We may even borrow Mr. Gregory's word for Mr. Harnack and say that M. Robbe-Grillet's novel is *original:* that it suggests one sort of useful future for the novel while at the same time, by the intensity and steady impetus and completing of its own special human concern, it recalls what good novels traditionally do. It is true that M. Robbe-Grillet's techniques do not seem to allow for much scope or freedom; but in his novel they convince us that, often, modern life doesn't either. This is a warning to optimists.

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B. L. REID

Thy Hand, Great Anarch!

GENERALIZING IN ORDER TO MAKE AN EXCEPTION of his particular subject, Chekhov, Frank O'Connor recently set down the opinion that most great writers are marked by a "streak of the charlatan." "They strike a pose; they talk big; they feel they have a message." Richard Ellmann's new biography of Joyce (which is jostling powerfully for space in my head with John Malcolm Brinnin's new book on Gertrude Stein[1]) amply documents, if we had needed further proof, the case that big men in the arts are likely not to be ordinary pleasant fellows. The ways of the life in art are likely to be jealous, secretive, egocentric, at best defensive and desperate—in Joyce's early Dedalian formula, ways of "silence, exile, and cunning." These are occupational hazards even more acute for the successful writer than for the failure. Gertrude Stein addressed that irony in one of her most sensible manners after she had made some money for the first time with her writing in 1933 and 1934, with *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and *Four Saints in Three Acts:*

> The thing is like this, it is all a question of identity. It is all a question of the outside being outside and the inside being inside. As long as the outside does not put a value on you it remains outside but when it does put a value on you then it gets inside or rather if the outside puts a value on you then all your inside gets to be outside.

Charlatan seems to me the wrong word for Gertrude Stein; a charlatan is a pretender, and there was no pretense, only a steady monolithic autohypnosis, in her pontifical certitude about her own genius. She called herself "one of the masters of English prose," "the creative literary mind of the century," and ranked herself with the Bible and Homer and Shakespeare. In Mr. Brinnin's mainly clear-headed book, Gertrude Stein's life-long self-indulgence, the adulation she exacted tyrannically from her friends as the price of her presence, is one of the uncomely things that get candidly confessed at last. In one of his daintier expressions of the matter,

> Gertrude Stein was never moved by the necessity of the visionary to be subsumed or immolated in mystical reaches; her vision, clear as it was, encompassed no prospect in which her own place was not comfortably and importantly defined.

In handling the big question, is Miss Stein a great writer, Mr. Brinnin is less candid. He does indeed see the infertility, the deadliness, of

[1] THE THIRD ROSE: GERTRUDE STEIN AND HER WORLD, by *John Malcolm Brinnin.* Atlantic-Little, Brown. $6.00.

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her major mode, and says so several times, though rather too gently. Her hand on the language was a heavy, stifling one, a real mortmain, and the fact ought to be said straight out. Instead Mr. Brinnin describes as "brave," "courageous," "heroic" her "reconnaissance over areas that had to be mapped, if only to warn others away." To call Gertrude Stein's thirty-year program of treating language "as if it had nothing to do with thought" on the one hand a "great and resonant error," and on the other hand "a mistake of which only a great and original talent is capable," is not only doubletalk but critical doublethink. In reviewing Ellmann's book, Dwight Macdonald called Joyce heroic; but one feels a truer justice there. Joyce wrote to Nora Barnacle, "The actual difficulties of my life are incredible but I despise them"—theatrical, but starkly true, and heroic. Joyce described himself to a doctor as "a man of small virtue, inclined to alcoholism." Therein lies a self-knowledge, a nerve, and a wit completely outside the range of Gertrude Stein. And Joyce's hand on the language was always light and warm and revivifying—partly, at least, because it never ceased to be playful. I feel more tyranny and arrogance than heroism in Miss Stein's life, and more stubbornness and stupidity than originality in her art. So I feel a failure of nerve rather than of critical judgment when Mr. Brinnin, in speaking of the labors that produced *The Making of Americans,* says, "Yet her efforts were heroic, and for many years it would be as difficult to damn the gigantic work that produced them as it would be to read the book itself."

Surely Mr. Brinnin need not have feared that bolder facing of Gertrude Stein's weaknesses as a writer would invalidate his book. What he undertook was a still legitimate task, and he has carried it out in a way that is thoroughly scrupulous and always interesting. Miss Stein was a bad writer, but a serious and productive one, and her theories were challenging and complex. During her lifetime hardly any good writing for or against her work appeared; aside from essays by Edmund Wilson, F. C. Flint, and Kenneth Burke, the criticism that she knew was tediously thin and uninformed. Thornton Wilder's admirable paper appeared only in 1947, as introduction to the first of her posthumous volumes, *Four in America.* It is too bad that she did not live to read the kind of painstaking and sympathetic exegesis given her writings in Donald Sutherland's *Gertrude Stein: A Biography of Her Work,* of 1951, and now by Mr. Brinnin, who properly praises Sutherland's brilliant analysis and appreciation as a "lay poem." Sutherland has stated the positive case for Gertrude Stein better than it is likely to be stated again. The great value of *The Third Rose* lies in its evocation of "Her World" rather than of "Her Work." Mr. Brinnin has written an excellent piece of biography and cultural history, and, with a keen ear for anecdote and a sharp eye for principles, has told us much that we still wanted to know about the psyche and the society of Miss Stein and "her" twentieth century, as she liked to consider it, in her proprietary way. The book moves most confidently, tastefully, and profit-

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ably in those areas, such as modern painting and music and philosophy, where Mr. Brinnin has made himself a cultivated amateur. He makes the fact and the image come out fresh and clear.

I am grateful, for example, for his expert amateur's insight into the matter and manner of cubism in painting, if not in literature; for his recovery of the circumstances and the impact of the Armory Show of 1913; for his newly circumstantial recollection of the famous "banquet Rousseau"; for numerous glimpses of Picasso when he was young and struggling, especially that of Max Jacob rising in the morning to give Picasso his turn in the only bed in the poor studio they shared and leaving his footprints on the drawings with which Picasso had strewn the floor in his night's work—footprints that had to be expunged by experts years later when the drawings acquired "value"; for the fullest and sanest account yet of the birth and growth of the famous Stein collection at 27 Rue de Fleurus and of the literary salon that flourished for thirty years around it, or inside it; most grateful of all, I think, for a closer and clearer look at Leo Stein, the quirky, difficult, occluded, hypochondriac brother who took leave of Gertrude in 1912, "disaggregating," as he put it, with the hope that they might thereafter "maintain our respective and due proportions while sucking gleefully our respective oranges."

Why is Leo easier to like, from our reader's distance, than Gertrude? Partly, I suppose, because he failed so elaborately while she was succeeding so speciously. Both of them carried about all their lives the psychology of the spoiled brat, the tyrannical freedom and the arrogant self-indulgence of the propertied orphan. Leo's arrogance was almost as great as Gertrude's but somehow far less dull—differently based and environed and felt and expressed. It did not have so much the sense of itself as the known world; it confessed a context around the ego with a function other than service and adulation; furthermore it recognized its own vulnerability. For example, Leo's "pariah complex" was doubtless in part paranoiac and absurd, but it showed that he was aware, as Gertrude Stein never seemed to be, that being a Jew was a matter of some kind of moment. Mr. Brinnin quotes Alfred Kazin's account of meeting Leo Stein at Bernard Berenson's villa when Leo was a "tall, gentle, gangling old man" of seventy-five, "very rustic, nervous, deaf," obsessed, at the end of his life, with the question of why men lie. To set that image alongside Gertrude Stein is very damaging to her, obsessed so differently—with "creative recognition" of the bare face of things, the completely objective recording of the eye-and-ear sense of the "continuous present," so that "causes," "right and wrong," "history," "thought," moral and intellectual content, in a word, found no appropriate place in her work of art. "Any thing that is is enough if it is," she said.

I'd like to be sweeter and lighter about this, less neo-Victorian, but I find the effect of the splendid fullness and clarity of *The Third Rose* is to make Gertrude Stein easier to see and harder to care about. She has

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always been a bore as a writer, and now after Mr. Brinnin shows her fully for the first time as a person, she turns out to be a bore that way too. She was a bore as a writer, except at the beginning, because she operated with a hopelessly false notion of language, the notion that words were empty objects, neutral counters, entirely subject to the writer's whimsical distribution. She could never understand why her whimsical distributions failed to carry her idiosyncratic sense. She was trying to ignore the dictionary and a thousand years of communal practice. When Georges Braque, the most articulate of the cubist painters, says that his purpose was not "to try and *reconstitute* an anecdotal fact, but to *constitute* a pictorial fact," we understand at once and value both the verbal and the pictorial statement. And the thing can be done in language, of course, has been done—most grandly in Joyce's great "night" book *Finnegans Wake*. But he did it by thickening and multiplying the semantic dutifulness of words, not by sterilizing and squeezing out the meaning which is their live organism. Joyce loved words as words, for the richness of significant content that was native to them. Mr. Brinnin sees this weakness in Gertrude Stein plainly but states it forgivingly:

> . . . she had been courageous, but she had also made clear how quickly a poet could reach the vasts of lunar silence. Sooner or later somebody was bound to make such experiments, if only to make sure that the landscape of the moon could not support human life. Gertrude Stein brought back proof that, as long as literature involves the responsibilities of the rational mind, the known world is its only planet. . . . But for people concerned with literature as an infinitely viable art, she had approached with heroic singleness, and perhaps had solved, a crucial problem—whether or not it is possible to have an absolutely personal idiom and still have communicable meaning.

That seems to me over-generous, by any serious critical standard. Kenneth Burke spoke the crushing truth about Gertrude Stein almost forty years ago, when she was in mid-career. In treating words as "plastic" (Mr. Brinnin's term) she was, as Burke said, "violating her genre" by ignoring "the inherent property of words: that quality in the literary man's medium which makes him start out with a definiteness that the other arts do not possess." She had indeed solved the crucial problem Mr. Brinnin mentions, solved it in her second book, *The Making of Americans,* but she never took a straight look at her answer. She communicated movingly in *Three Lives* at the beginning of her career, and dully again at the end, in such books as *Brewsie and Willie* and *Wars I Have Seen*. By that time she had nothing much to say; the intervening thirty volumes of wasted motion had blunted all her tools of seeing and speaking.

Mr. Brinnin's book makes plainer than ever the fact that Gertrude

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Stein had available for fifty years an aesthetical life of almost voluptuary richness. Yet it is hard to see that anything significant in that life came from within herself, or was taken into herself. She impresses one, again at a reader's distance, as the dead center of a carousel of creativity. Something was fatally missing in her, as woman and as artist. I think now it was that essence she needed to counter and lubricate her native Augustan *gravitas:* a free, functioning sense of comedy. Again it was the thing that Joyce sublimely had, that serious comic sense which is sometimes more efficiently serious even than the tragic sense, because of its more flexible and poignant powers of irony, the easy amalgams it can make of ridiculousness and grandeur. Thus Joyce is heartbreakingly funny, Gertrude Stein is backbreakingly solemn. So Joyce was free to pray, "Loud, heap miseries upon us yet entwine our arts with laughters low," whereas the only environment that occurs to me as proper for Gertrude Stein is the great dead scene at the end of *The Dunciad,* where "Light dies before thy uncreating word."

***Notes on Contributors** (cont.)*

ROGER SHATTUCK is the author of *The Banquet Years;* he teaches at the University of Texas.

DAVID PAUL is an Irish poet whose translations from the French have appeared in various magazines.

After an extended stay in Portugal, BENJAMIN DeMOTT recently returned to Amherst where he is Professor of English.

NORMAN N. HOLLAND teaches English at M.I.T. and is currently at work on a study of psychoanalytic criticism.

LOUIS SIMPSON, a frequent contributor, teaches at the University of California at Berkeley.

G. E. DIMOCK, JR. will spend next year in Greece on an ACLS Scholarship, writing a book on the *Odyssey.*

A new book of short stories by GEORGE P. ELLIOTT will be brought out in the Winter by Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

MARVIN MUDRICK will be a visiting Professor of English at Queens College during the 1960-61 academic year.

B. L. REID is an Associate Professor of English at Mt. Holyoke College and has published poems, stories and criticisms in THE HUDSON REVIEW and other magazines.

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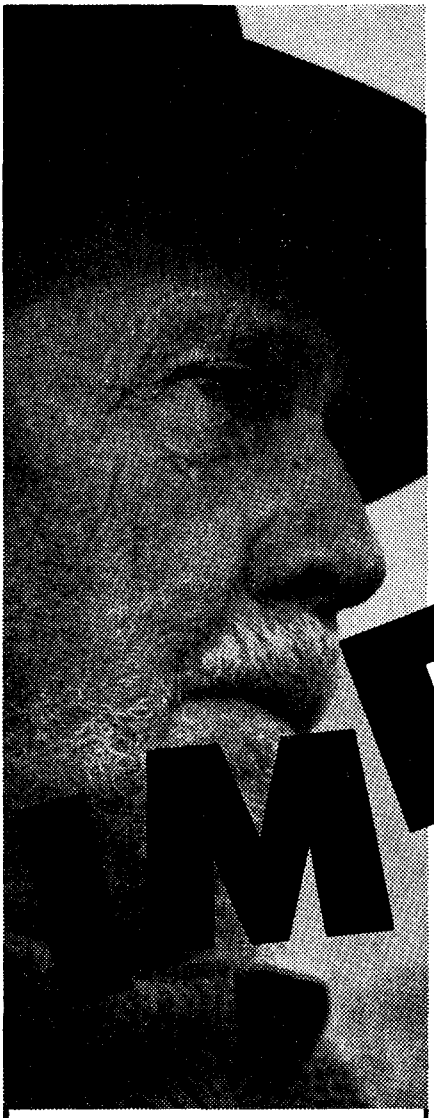

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